5-2016

Compassionate Discipline: A Study of Research and Practice

Julie Wasserman
Bank Street College of Education

Compassionate Discipline:

A Study of Research and Practice

By

Julie Wasserman

Early Childhood Special Education

Mentor:

Margaret Blachly

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science in Education

Bank Street College of Education

2016

Abstract

Compassionate Discipline

Julie Wasserman

The author presents a spectrum of disciplinary methods, then, based on research and experience, proceeds to analyze particularly new-aged, child-centered disciplinary methods. For this study, the author gathered and synthesized these methods as part of *compassionate discipline*: a disciplinary style that promotes the idea that teachers and parents should respect children's needs, collaborate with them and set limits for them to keep them safe. Compassionate discipline cultivates autonomy and self-awareness.

The author experimented with compassionate discipline by applying strategies in classroom settings for two and three-year-old children and six and seven-year-old children, and collecting authentic assessment data. Results showed that compassionate discipline fostered a close relationship between teacher and student and helped children to acquire autonomy, while being respected and validated in the classroom.

Due to the employment of compassionate discipline, children learned to be independent, to be conscientious of others and to follow classroom rules based on logical understandings discovered with the guidance of their teacher.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This work is a literature review, a handbook, and a study all at once. Through research and practice, I have created my philosophy of *compassionate discipline*, which applies to teachers as well as parents. Compassionate discipline is a term I assigned to a disciplinary style that focuses on showing children trust and validation for who they are through small moments, as well as through a teacher's and parent's phrases, gestures and attitudes towards children.

Furthermore, compassionate discipline is defined as a kind way of letting children know they did something wrong in order to empower and educate them. It is a method that helps them to know that they are capable of making a better choice in the future without feeling guilty for making a mistake in the present.

Compassionate discipline is a philosophy, and it is also a disposition that a teacher has towards her students. Since discipline takes place over time and not at a single moment, there needs to be a relationship in order to implement successful discipline tactics. More specifically there must be a compassionate relationship.

There are three elements of compassionate discipline, which I created based on research, that build on and support each other:

1. *Respect*
2. *Collaboration*
3. *Limitation*

The first element, "Respect," establishes how to see our children as real people who deserve acceptance and respect. The second element, collaboration, demonstrates

how to collaborate respectfully and with a flexibility for children's needs. The last element, limitation, presents how to limit respectfully.

Compassionate discipline does not advise parents to set zero limits. Rather, the philosophy sets forth a framework for parents and teachers to rethink the limits and to be honest with themselves, so that they can set limits that are appropriate, rather than arbitrary and over-controlling. For our children, safety is the first priority, followed by personal development and independence. This is the mindset that compassionate discipline uses to set limits.

> *"When we fail to examine our objectives, we're left by default with practices that are intended solely to get kids to do what they're told"* (Kohn, 2006, p.5).

With all that we know about the effect that our role in the classroom has on our students it makes sense to implement compassionate discipline by choosing to respect our children and to look at the relationship without the perspective of control over children, but rather, working, alongside them.

The process of becoming open-minded happens by slowly leaving the comfort zone, coming back in and then going out again, a little further each time. As we review the literature supporting compassionate discipline, you might be intrigued and let it influence your perspective. You might practice it a bit and then hold back because it is too different and then try it again later; this fluctuation is natural. Learning and changing takes time. Each reader should have his or her own process of growth just as any student would.

Before we dive in I urge you to open your mind. Listen to the literature and hear my thoughts.

"Life is constantly renewing and remaking and changing and transfiguring itself."

(Landreth, 2012, p.111)

Ask yourself:

How do we become better teachers, parents and caregivers?

We research and reflect.

How do we alter our view of our relationship with our children and students?

We honestly introspect.

How do we shake off our old perspectives?

We open our minds to learn new concepts.

How do we apply those changes?

We practice and reflect.

Background of This Independent Study

Reflection on the Reason for Taking Up this Study:

I believe that self-esteem is of the utmost importance. I went into education because I loved the idea of supporting children in fostering self-esteem and in empowering them. Embarking on this study allowed me to experiment with different disciplinary methods as I journeyed on my career as a teacher. I knew some of the ways I did *not* want to discipline my students; but through this study I could really evaluate and compare different methods of discipline.

How this Particular Research Interest Emerged from a Specific Setting, Set of Circumstances, and/or Social Context:

I saw through many different work experiences in high school and college, how teachers disciplined students in varying ways. Granted, it is difficult to manage a group of kids who do not always listen, but what I sometimes saw really shocked me and caused me to think deeply about the kind of a teacher I wanted to be.

Some teachers were harsh and embarrassed their students. They gasped and yelled when students did "bad things," which made the whole class stop and stare at the wrongdoer, causing the child to feel attacked. Those kids learned to be afraid of their teachers, rather than learning to become good people. In contrast, I encountered other teachers who were soft spoken, yet firm. They did not blatantly embarrass children. They would point out in a calm, logical manner when a child was doing something wrong and approach the issue without attacking the child's character.

Children responded differently to the two types of teachers. With the first, children continued to misbehave but were more careful to avoid that teacher out of fear of her. With the second type of teacher, the children altered their behaviors, over a long-term process, to listen to the teacher—but not out of fear. From my observations, I noticed that teachers have a great deal of responsibility when it comes to discipline.

We teach and we discipline and we teach through our discipline. The teachers who have made the biggest impact on me were the ones who spoke softly to children, and instead of making the children feel guilty when they erred, the teachers made the students notice that what they *did*, was wrong, not that *they*, themselves, were bad.

I also became especially interested in this topic because I read a lot about psychology and there is a robust pool of research showing the importance of early childhood experiences. Entin (2013), found that negative experiences with unhealthy discipline can cause low self-esteem in children. Moreover, there are deeply damaging effects of criticism on children.

Furthermore, Rabbi Alon Gul, LMSW said, “whatever we teach will be learned.” (personal communication, March 12, 2015). Gul explained that if parents discipline their children with anger, their children will learn to feel angry at themselves when they make mistakes, even as adults. If a child is yelled at or given an angry look as a form of rebuke, that instance teaches him or her to feel bad about making mistakes and trains him or her to get angry at him or herself when he or she does so. Gul stated that when parents are overly critical of their children, those experiences cause their children to be over-critical

of themselves. Children need empathy and compassion when they make mistakes, not anger. We may not realize that they will internalize our anger at them when they make mistakes, and if we get angry with them for making a mistake, that experience is something they will carry with them through adulthood.

Moreover, according to Drexler (2013), when parents or teachers reprimand, but neglect to distinguish between the child's mistake and the child's self-worth, they can make the child feel like a wrongdoer, rather than a child who made a mistake. This shaming form of discipline can cause the child to think that *s/he is bad* and that s/he does not only make mistakes but *is* a bad person.

From my research and observations over the years, prior to this study, I developed strong opinions about discipline. Once I became a teacher, I practiced speaking kindly to children in the way my teaching role models did. I read books like *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (2003) and *Unconditional Parenting* by Alfie Kohn (2005). I reflected deeply on my discourse with my students, and I continued to refine my own vision of appropriate discipline.

The Particular Biases and/or Values with Which I Come to this Study:

I maintain a very high standard when it comes to properly disciplining children. I am a sensitive teacher and am careful to speak to children in a way that I would want to be spoken to. I view yelling at children as more harmful than educational, so this perspective informed my attitude on discipline and set the bar very high for myself.

Important Terms Defined:

Please refer to the earlier definition of "compassionate discipline" in the introduction.

A Brief Overview of the Research Methodology:

My research consisted of me intentionally experimenting with compassionate discipline strategies in my two teaching settings and documenting the outcomes. I worked in a toddler classroom of two and three-year-olds and a small group learning setting with six and seven-year-olds. Using a self-designed template as a way to collect qualitative data, I recorded the outcome of using these strategies in everyday situations that came up naturally in the classroom.

The Limitations of the Study:

I was not always able to document the data as soon as it took place. Even if I used compassionate discipline and obtained strong results for my research, I was not always able to record it and therefore lost some data-gathering opportunities.

My research spanned two different age groups, not all age groups. Although all children have diverse learning needs, these children were in general education settings and the study did not extend to students with special needs in special education settings.

There was no control factor for personality. Since I knew these children well and had a unique relationship with each one, the outcomes of my methods were partially

dependent on the particular nature of my relationship with each child and the instances they were used in.

Lastly, the methodologies that were researched as part of this study were developed from reading both parenting and teaching literature. This may make some strategies less practical in the classroom than others because parenting in a family or community setting is different from teaching in a classroom setting.

The Foundations:

What Teachers and Parents *Need* to Know About the Emotional Effects of Discipline

Power: The Impact of the Teacher's Role

We teachers play a major role in the classroom; we are the driving force of how the classroom community is molded because ultimately, it is our classroom. This study presents the importance of making the classroom a place that the children have ownership over, but at the very end of the day, this classroom and these children are our responsibility.

With this responsibility, it is crucial to understand the extent of our power and how we should use it; where we should let go of our power and where we may need to maintain control for safety reasons or for the sake of the class's success.

Furthermore, based on how we set up the classroom environment we show the children what we really think they are capable of. For example, if we set the room up in a way that they can access play materials easily or things they may need, that means the teachers think the children are capable of learning to treat the materials appropriately. This example is in contrast to a room where no toys or play materials are available for the children and only the teachers can decide what they will play with.

Discipline is More Than "Managing" a Class

There are many different approaches to discipline. Discipline is a major component of a teacher's job. Classrooms of all ages demand significant effort towards class management. The question is, *how*? In what way is the teacher managing his or her class? How does the teacher view his or her role? What about the children's roles?

Discipline has many different forms. This work surveys various disciplinary approaches and parenting styles.

> I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized. (Ginott, 1972, p.15)

The way that we discipline our children and students has many effects on their development: they learn about what is right or wrong. When we reprimand children for making certain choices or guide them from one choice to another, it shows where our opinions lie regarding what is acceptable and what is not.

Moreover, Gul said that when we discipline children for making mistakes, we model for them how they should react to themselves when they make mistakes (personal communication, March 12, 2015). Children may have an emotional outburst; children may hit, bite, yell, kick, talk back or disobey and therefore, the way we react not only shows how to react to themselves when they make mistakes but also how they should feel about themselves after making a mistake. They interpret the way that we feel about them as how they should feel about themselves. Our thoughts, intentions and actions count

here; we are their models for action and reaction and no matter the age of our students we make an impression.

This shows how complex the role of discipline is in the classroom: discipline is not only about teaching children what is right and wrong, discipline is about modeling for them the way they should feel about themselves when they make mistakes. A major part of this process is emotional regulation, or the ability to self-regulate when having "big feelings" (when one is very angry, happy, sad etc.) as some teachers call it.

The Role of Self-Regulation in Discipline

Self-regulation is taught throughout the day in an early childhood classroom and especially through disciplinary experiences, because when children misbehave, there are usually strong feelings accompanying or causing the behavior. In fact, it is crucial that we think about how we are regulating our *own* emotions, because we are showing our students how to regulate *their* emotions, as well as how to manage difficult emotions in general when they arise.

Therefore, as we discipline and manage our children, we need to be mindful of the "*how*." According to Sarah Landy, Ph.D., "Infants and young children rely heavily on adult caregivers to help them regulate emotion and behavior" (as cited in Gallagher, 2005). Children depend on their caregivers from a young age to help them learn how to manage their emotions, and how they should feel about daily occurrences.

Furthermore, Mary O'Brien found that, "Teachers can support self-regulation by accepting and guiding children's expressions of emotions" (as cited in Gallagher, 2005).

The more we accept children's emotions and help them express themselves appropriately, the better at regulating themselves in the long run they will be. O'Brien continues, to state that teachers should use emotion words (labels for emotions for children, such as anger or sadness) and offer alternatives for dealing with stressors such as conflicts in the classroom with peers. This way, we (teachers) help children to learn about what they are feeling, rather than forcing them to repress those feelings by deeming them as inappropriate. "Inappropriate," here, means making them feel bad for feeling the way they are feeling. In words this might sound like, "Why would you feel that way!?" showing a lack of acceptance of their feelings. By accepting feelings, we help them learn to navigate and problem solve with their emotions.

We have the power to help children organize themselves even in times of distress and intense emotion. When we guide children to stop and assess a situation that makes them feel angry, sad, or frightened and then to express themselves and find a strategy to manage the situation appropriately, we not only minimize their stress but help them feel safe at this time. O'Brien continued, "With repeated, sensitive support, children come to know that they will be 'okay,' that justice will prevail much of the time, and that, most important, they have some control over their experiences." By being there for them in a calm and supportive way, children learn that emotions are acceptable and that they can get through whatever they are feeling and be okay.

Children will be able to learn how to self-regulate as much as we help them express themselves appropriately, label their emotions and feel safe as they navigate their emotions.

Literature Review:

Disciplinary Methods in Parenting and Teaching

Author's Note: Parenting vs. Teaching

This literature review surveys disciplinary styles ranging from high control of children to low control; high warmth with children to low warmth, and strict rules to lax standards with children. The perspectives come from literature and media about both parenting and teaching because both have a significant influence on children. While the two roles are ultimately different, they both play prominent roles in children's lives. I value and learn from both types of resources in my work with young children and therefore purposefully included both in this study.

Discipline: A Range of Teaching and Parenting Styles

In today's day and age there are countless ways to learn about parenting and teaching styles. Research studies, books and websites are all informative and educational. Perhaps some of the most famous parenting research was done by Dr. Baumrind in the 1960's and 70's. Baumrind studied and labeled the different styles of parenting that were commonly used. These styles included authoritarian, authoritative, permissive-indulgent, and—later added to the list by researchers—permissive-neglectful. These styles are practiced by many parents.

As stated above, parenting and teaching overlap. Dr. Barnas outlined the four teaching styles in 2000 (regarding teacher involvement and discipline), which echoed Baumrind's four parenting styles (as cited in Bernstein, 2013).

Baumrind described the authoritarian parent as highly controlling, punitive and not very warm. "The authoritarian parent attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority" (1966, p.890). Similarly, the authoritarian teacher believes in low involvement but enforces strict discipline. Rules are not up for discussion in the authoritarian teacher's classroom. The teacher does not acknowledge weakness or failure and does not offer personal attention or encouraging words to promote success (Bernstein, 2013).

Although the authoritarian style is controlling and might seem "successful", Dr. William Sears and Martha Sears R.N. found that,

> Authoritarianism creates distance between parent and child... It is based on punishment, which can easily create anger, and thus distance the child from the parent, and it makes little or no allowance for the temperament or developmental level of the child (Sears & Sears, 1995, p.3).

Authoritative parenting is very warm but also very controlling of the child, relying heavily on reward and punishment. The authoritative parent does not maintain endless restrictions and affirms the child's individuality and special interests. This parent sees him or herself as in charge of the child and sets standards for that child (Baumrind, 1966).

Barnas said that the authoritative teacher is similar to the authoritative parent in that they are very involved with the child but also emphasize firm discipline. They care about their students but only reward outcome. They create and explain rules to children and follow them consistently. Lastly, authoritative teachers give high praise for success and are always willing to help (as cited in Bernstein, 2013).

On the other end of the spectrum of parenting and teaching styles lies the permissive-indulgent style: a *laissez faire* perspective. It is neither demanding nor directive. Adults say, "kids will be kids" and are accepting, not punitive, of children's impulses, desires and actions. Rules and decisions are decided on with the child. "She presents herself to the child as a resource for him to use as he wishes, not as an ideal for him to emulate, nor as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering her ongoing or future behavior" (Baumrind, 1966, p.889). The permissive-indulgent parent does not

force his or her orders on children but rather informs them of house rules without intending to shape or alter the child's behaviors (Bernstein, 2013).

In a similar, but slightly different way, the permissive-indulgent teacher is almost too involved in teaching his or her students. S/he is so supportive that s/he fears doing anything that might hurt a child's self-esteem or stunt his or her personal growth. With the assumption that all children need extensive support and help, the permissive-indulgent teacher makes it nearly impossible to fail tests. The permissive-indulgent parent and teacher are similar in that they are entirely accepting of the children's' actions and decisions and do not promote them to push themselves to grow out of their comfort zones (Bernstein, 2013).

The fourth style was added to Baumrind's list of parenting styles in the 1980's (Baumrind, 2008). The least restrictive parent is permissive-neglectful, or uninvolved. S/he is neither demanding nor responsive, wielding little control and warmth. S/he shows almost no interest in his or her children. Children of uninvolved parents may participate in deviant or high-risk behaviors.

The permissive-neglectful teacher is the kind of teacher that teaches a subject without regard for the student's needs. S/he does not discipline or enforce rules and discourages questions because s/he wants as little student contact as possible (Bernstein, 2013).

These four parenting/teaching styles show how great the range is in discipline today and in the past by way of research. Regardless of studies, though, most parents

discipline their children by adopting pieces of different styles as well as their own philosophies. Some use more mainstream, widely-accepted techniques and others implement more extreme practices that are not as popular.

What Are Some Contemporary Disciplinary Practices in this Country?

Reality television is a medium that shows what some parents are doing and what we might be able to learn from them for better or worse. One particularly informative reality T.V. series *Extreme Guide to Parenting* (D'Entrone, D'Entrone and Lazin, 2014) shows the range of extreme disciplinary and child-rearing tools that some parents use. *Extreme Guide to Parenting* does not show how all people discipline their children but it is still informative because it shows some. Featured parents represent what some parents do, or bits and pieces of people's philosophies in today's day and age, and they can be used as a sample standard for how some people parent.

The segment "The Smartest, Most Handsome, Best Kid Ever" featured a family from New York, Jeff and Marisa Eisenberg and their son Austen. Mrs. Eisenberg believed in making her son, Austen, age four, the most successful he could be by pushing him to the maximum. Mrs. Eisenberg saw herself as a loving parent and tried to use discipline to be supportive. This episode was very informative for this study and is explained and analyzed in depth because Mrs. Eisenberg used praise, punishment, and many other strategies that span Baumrind's parenting styles.

Austen was pushed to read, write, and excel in sports, chess, and exercise. He had extracurricular activities every day of the week and double on the weekends. Mrs.

Eisenberg fully controlled his life and his interests. When he showed emotions like fear or fatigue from exercise, she denied them and pushed him to continue striving for perfection.

Mrs. Eisenberg's methods in the show appeared to be coming from love and she did not punish her son often by outright spanking him. However, she used various forms of punishment in the reality show. In one instance, when Austen could not spell his full name, she postponed his breakfast until he did. When asked why she raised him so strictly, she said that she thought she would have gone farther in life had she received more support from her parents, therefore she wanted to support her son by pushing him.

The way she pushed him constituted a form of discipline. Her discourse with him constantly included her denying his feelings and thoughts on various matters which was an invalidation of him as a person. Denying a child's wants and needs is similar to punishment and can make a child feel worthless. The invalidation took place in various situations. In one situation, Austen was afraid of swimming without a life vest in the pool and Mrs. Eisenberg told him over and over that he had to do it so he could be a "big kid" at camp. He kept showing fear and said he was scared many times but she did not let him exhibit that fear and only forced him further to discard the vest.

In another situation, she made him compete in a strenuous obstacle course against her and when he slowed down she pushed him to beat her so he would not be a "loser." This was a form of verbal negativity similar to scolding. Mr. Eisenberg objected by saying that their son was tired and Austen indeed showed that he was very tired, but she did not relent and rather pushed him to keep going.

When an interviewer asked Austen, “What do you like?” he had no answer because all of his “interests” were controlled by his mother. Without validation for one’s own wants and needs, a child cannot be expected to feel much self-worth.

Mrs. Eisenberg used an authoritarian style. She had good intentions because she was trying to be loving and supportive, but she mostly denied her son’s feelings, likes and dislikes. If he was not interested in an activity that she planned for him but she thought it was best for him, she did not heed his opinions, let alone her husband’s, on the matter. Not hearing input from the child is another description for an authoritarian style.

She also did not accept Austen’s emotions. If Austen expressed fear and Mrs. Eisenberg did not want him to feel that way, she ignored him rather than empathizing. She did, however, make an exception to her parenting style when she challenged herself at the end of the episode to overcome a great fear of diving into a swimming pool. She did this at the behest of her husband because, as he said, if she was making Austen overcome a fear of swimming without floaties, she should also overcome a fear of her own. She did this and thus, showed that she did not fit categorically into one style of parenting.

Most parents and teachers do not fit into one single style, but many may strive for certain philosophies or methods to emulate.

So, Which Parenting and Teaching Style is Best?

The many differing parenting and teaching styles have diverse impacts on children, for varying reasons, according to findings from Feng et al.; Houts et al.;

Kochanska, Aksan, & Joy. One reason is because children have such a range of temperaments and the way that they impact parent's behaviors can alter situations and make outcomes inconsistent (as cited in Bernstein, 2013).

Baumrind's parenting styles: permissive-indulgent, permissive-neglectful, and authoritarian parenting were found to foster difficult personality characteristics in children, and negatively impact issues in school performance (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad; Ginsburg et al.; Parke & Buriel; Paulussen-Hoogeboom et al. and Thompson). They have been found to be correlated with:

> "…a variety of problematic personal, social and emotional characteristics that can also play out in academic settings in the form of anxiety and low achievement, but also in irresponsibility, impulsivity, dependency, lack of persistence, unreasonable expectations and demands and dishonesty." (as cited in Bernstein, 2013)

Conversely, findings suggest that authoritative parenting has been associated with more adaptive social, emotional and moral capacities from children as well as their best intellectual capabilities (as cited in Bernstein, 2013). Authoritative parenting more often led to children functioning well social-emotionally and able to perform at their best intellectually.

Barnas, along with many other psychologists have found that authoritative parenting and teaching breeds the most successful children. From these findings it might seem that authoritative parenting and teaching is the "best" style—but is it really?

Authoritative and authoritarian styles specifically encourage parents to take punitive measures with children, however, I am very conflicted about the implementation of punishment. Faber, Mazlish and Kohn represent the anti-punishment school of thought. Why does the authoritative style seem like such a positive way to parent and teach according to Baumrind (1966) and Barnas' research (as cited in Bernstein, 2013)? And yet, this philosophy includes punishment, which is contrary to the beliefs of renowned authors: Faber, Mazlish and Kohn. Should punishment be used? If so, how?

Does Punishment Have a Place in Discipline?

One form of punishment in particular, physical punishment, known in different cultures by different names (e.g. "hitting," "whooping," "spanking," and "switching") is highly controversial in the parenting and teaching forums and has become even more so in recent decades.

In a Cable News Network (CNN) interview, "The Generations of Corporal Punishment," an African-American mother, Katrena Hall, and her mother, Laura, explained why they felt that spanking was crucial to their parenting (Navarrette, 2014). Hall said that her four-year-old son Joshua gets a spanking every single day, or whenever is needed. Prior to the interview he had spat on his sister and Hall responded by saying, "Son you will never ever spit on anyone again." She said, "This is gonna consist of maybe four or five pops on your leg and that is the end of it...with a belt" (2014).

In response to the question, "Don't you think that it's possible, at the very least possible, that they'd be the same type of kids today if you just yelled at them, took things

away, made them go to sleep early, took their toys away and didn't lay a hand on them?" she responded, "Not at all...That's not my belief system. I believe in the bible, I believe in the word of god." Hall went onto say that she did not believe in "Sparing the rod" (Navarrette, 2014).

In addition, nationally syndicated columnist, Ruben Navarrette (2014) wrote, "Fear is essential to respect." He asked, "When did parents become such wimps?" He said, "The problem isn't that too many kids get spanked. It's that some kids who need a spanking might never get one." Navarrette views a proper parent as being frightening to his or her children and keeping them in order. Without this structure in place, children will not respect their parents and will be "CEO's of the household." The real sin, Navarrette said, is that parents neglect their duty to "raise good kids who grow up into respectful and responsible adults."

Navarrette brought up an important point: most parents want their kids to grow up to be respectful and responsible. Different parents take different routes to get to that place. Research studies show that cultural background can significantly influence the disciplinary route a parent takes (as cited in "Researchers: African-Americans", 2011).

Elizabeth Gershoff, corporal punishment researcher at the University of Texas in Austin, said that parents of all ethnic groups, socioeconomic categories, and education levels practice some form of physical punishment with their children (as cited in "Researchers: African-Americans", 2014). Gershoff co-authored a meta-analysis (of over 88 studies) that examined 20,000 kindergartners and their parents. Findings showed that

89% of black parents, 79% of white parents, 80% of Hispanic parents and 73% of Asian parents said they have spanked their children.

This study showed that the ethnic group most likely to employ physical punishment was African-Americans. Interestingly however, the distinction was not by much: the percentages above are very comparable. Findings also showed that physical punishment strongly associated with children immediately complying with parents but also that it turned into physical abuse (Gershoff and Larzelere, 2002).

However, Gershoff wrote that diverse situational factors can change the effects of corporal punishment. But since children comply quickly with corporal punishment and this method of discipline also has the most potential of turning into abuse, it is such a complex and hot debate. Findings further showed that corporal punishment did not teach children right from wrong, and that children might be afraid of their parents and thus not misbehave when their parents are present; but when the parents are absent, the children will be more inclined to act out (Gershoff and Larzelere, 2002).

Baumrind and her team responded that, "The evidence presented in the meta-analysis does not justify a blanket injunction against mild to moderate disciplinary spanking" Baumrind et al. also concluded that, "[a] high association between corporal punishment and physical abuse is not evidence that mild or moderate corporal punishment increases the risk of abuse." Baumrind vouched her support for a lessened form of corporal punishment by making the point that even if some use it to an extreme degree that turns into abuse, it does not mean that moderate punishment is as harmful (Gershoff and Larzelere, 2002).

Who is to Decide What is Moderate Punishment?

Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist who has studied mental health issues and parenting in African-American communities, belongs to the school of thought that is anti-corporal punishment.

Poussaint said:

> It's culturally embedded in America that spanking is a legitimate and good way to discipline children. But the fact is, nearly all studies, except for a few, say it is not a good way of disciplining and can actually produce damage. (as cited in "Researchers: African-Americans,"2011)

Poussaint continued to say that even though parents say they were spanked and they are okay, they in fact might have scars that even they do not understand.

Chung et al. found that spanking can have extremely negative, long-lasting effects on children. For example, spanking has been shown to teach a child that they do not deserve respect (as cited in "Discipline at Home," 2016).

Furthermore, Cruz, Narciso, Pereira and Sampaio found that that spanking children destroyed the children's sensitivity and compassion they had for themselves and for others (as cited in "Discipline at Home," 2016). Moreover, spanking caused children to feel anger and to desire revenge. These emotions become repressed until much later when they can be expressed.

Gershoff (2013) found that spanking predicted increases in children's aggression, "over and above initial levels" and, actually, more spanking was associated with less long-term compliance (as cited in Gershoff, 2013). Ultimately, Gershoff concluded "We now have enough research to conclude that spanking is ineffective at best, and harmful to children at worst." Gershoff continued, stating that not only does research show that hitting is bad but also morally wrong because "spanking is hitting and hitting is violence" (2013). It seems that physical punishment has serious ramifications and will hurt more than help our children.

Is Corporal Punishment Legal? If So, to What Degree?

Despite findings such as Gershoff's, it seems that the law still protects spanking at home and school. The law in the United States allows for varying degrees of physical punishment to be used.

"In all 50 states and the District of Columbia, you are not forbidden by law to use corporal punishment on your child as long as the form of punishment is reasonable and does not cause injury" (Danly, 2016). While thirty-one states have banned corporal punishment at home, most of these states have statutes that delineated rules for how corporal punishment can be administered. For example, in New York, corporal punishment is allowed as long as "deadly force was not utilized ("State Laws," 2016)."

Most states in the U.S. have banned the use of corporal punishment against school children but school authorities still have the rights to use reasonable force and restraint to stop a "disturbance threatening physical injury to others" ("Discipline and the Law,"

2016). However, nineteen states still have laws that allow corporal punishment in schools ("Discipline at School," 2016). [1]

Scolding, a Non-Physical Punishment: Is it a Better Option?

Some might think that verbal punishment (i.e. scolding, yelling) is better than physical but that is false according to researcher Erik Sigsgaard of the Danish Center for Research in Institutions. Sigsgaard studied scolding in 2005 by observing and interviewing children and teachers over the course of several years as part of the process.

Scolding is defined as, "to speak in an angry or critical way to [someone who has done something wrong]" ("Dictionary," 2016). Sigsgaard explained that scolding might be a term that encompasses many types of verbal expressions and behavior-modifying interventions, usually stated or executed by adults toward children that are dependent on them.

Sigsgaard found that early childhood educators scold as part of, "a spontaneous, emotional reaction," not because they think it is educationally sound (Sigsgaard, 2005, P.81).

---

[1] Interestingly enough, I am from Ohio and only starting in 2009, schools in Ohio were banned from using corporal punishment (Block, 2011). That means, I could have been subject to spanking in school as I only graduated high school in 2009, fortunately I never was.

When asked, “What is scolding to you?” teachers in the study responded with adjectives including: angry, upset, irritated, annoyed and shouting (2005, p.81). Sigsgaard explained that the mode of expression, rather than the actual words used, is what characterizes a message as scolding.

Endo, Yoshikawa and Sannomiya found that the verbal content of scolding includes direct speech and indirect speech.

Direct speech:

- “Stop that!”
- “Do that!”

Indirect speech:

- Specifying what the child is not to do
- Reminding the child that he or she has been told before
- Criticizing the child’s personality
- Ignoring the child
- Expressing dissatisfaction by cursing
- Asking/being reproachful: “Why won’t you help?”

(as cited in Sigsgaard, 2005, p.45)

Sigsgaard said that children see little difference between physical and verbal violence. Moreover, when a child is punished in any manner, their self-respect is damaged and they are made to feel worthless.

A kindergartener taking part in the study said that scolding “is like hitting someone with your voice” (2005, p.38). Other statements described the experience of being scolded as:

- “I hurt inside.”
- “I cry.”
- “I feel like everyone is looking at me; it is embarrassing. I am also relieved, because now it’s over.”
- “So that, er,...I am thinking: I wish they would stop. That’s how I feel.” (2005, p.12)

Sigsgaard asked children for alternatives to scolding and one of the children responded, “I think they should just say that you’re not supposed to do what you just did, without scolding.” Another child said, “They could tell you that you can’t do it, instead of scolding. Then you’d learn it better, and you wouldn’t get so upset,” (2005, p.13).

Sigsgaard concluded that, "Parents who want to keep a close relation with their children should not scold too much...we are pushing away what is dearest to us” (“Scolding Kids,” 2002). The researcher further advised parents to tell children their opinion in a normal voice without shouting.

Conclusions showed that a “good” scolding adheres to the following guidelines:

“1. One should say what needs to be said without putting the child down.

2. The adult should respond to the act, not to the individual.

3. The child should be allowed to take part in a dialogue,” (2005, p.25).

If children felt as if they were being hit with words when scolded, is that any better than actual hitting? And with what we know about the effects of hitting, do we want to be doing that literally, or figuratively, ever? Sigsgaard's conclusions frame discipline in a whole new light, forcing us to think about the way we punish and rebuke. And for that matter, how we speak to our children and students in general.

I wonder—what roles do our emotions, character, kindness and compassion, all of which are traits that we value in interpersonal interactions, have in teaching? In discipline?

Discipline Revisited: "Working *With*" Instead of "Doing To"

Although studies showed the benefits of authoritative parenting and teaching, there were other childrearing and education experts that called for a change. These thinkers decried the "classic" versions of discipline referred to earlier in this literature review. They called for parents and teachers everywhere to meet the needs of their children instead of trying to control them.

These trailblazers emphasized the need for thinking about what lay in between the lines with discipline and our interactions with children altogether. They addressed the motives behind what we do and how we speak to our children. They lay these components as foundations for interacting with our children and students.

Alfie Kohn, American author and lecturer, believes in love and reason as an alternative to reward and punishment as he described in his work, *Unconditional Parenting* (2005). His theories challenge traditional schooling and conventional

discipline. In this revolutionary work, he said that parents and teachers needed to change their perspective—focus on how to meet children's needs instead of trying to get them to do what we want. Kohn pushed educators and parents to raise children to be expressive, active, thoughtful people rather than compliant and quiet. He denounced punishment and empty praise, calling for all children to be respected as they are.

Unconventional educators and authors Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish wrote several books in which they encouraged parents and teachers to discipline children with respect and empathy and without punishment.

They encouraged parents and teachers to liberate children to learn and to be curious in *How To Talk So Kids Can Learn*:

> Parents and teachers need to join forces and form *working* partnerships. Both need to know the difference between the words that demoralize and those that give courage; between the words that trigger confrontation and those that invite cooperation…and the words that free the natural desire to learn. (2003, p.16)

Another influential voice in the field of progressive discipline is Dr. Haim Ginott; he began his career as an elementary school teacher and then later became a clinical psychologist and parent educator. He was, in fact, the inspiration for the literary works of Faber and Mazlish. Ginott believed that, "[h]ow parents and teachers talk tells a child how they feel about him...to a large extent, their language determines his destiny" (as cited in Faber and Mazlish, 2003). Ginott attributed a heavy weight to the impact of parents' and teachers' words to children. They need to talk in a way that will facilitate the

growth of their children's self-esteem because if they are not careful, they could cause great damage.

Asadah Kirkland, an African-American mother and educator, said that it is important to watch our words, because children will learn to solve conflicts in the future based on how their parents disciplined them. She advises parents to incorporate "negotiation, respect of authority and courage" into their disciplinary methods (as cited in "Researchers: African-Americans", 2011).

Kirkland's anti-spanking book, *Beating Black Kids* elaborated on this perspective. Kirkland was inspired to write the book after hearing a friend say, "something about how you just need to beat kids sometimes" (as cited in "Researchers: African-Americans", 2011). The movement she started, thereafter, educates parents on how and why to abandon corporal punishment. Some parents resist her efforts because they were raised with physical punishments and, "...don't want to incriminate their parents."

Nevertheless, Kirkland firmly believes that children will grow up with the future their parents have created for them. As part of her "Beating Black Kids" movement, Kirkland's organization, Asadah Sense Consulting, created a "Parental Code of Ethics" (2010), which stated that parents should respect children and not try to control their minds or decisions.

Punishment Revisited: It Hurts More Than It Helps

Faber and Mazlish (2003) wrote about the negative effects of punishing children. They state that children will feel like bad people when punished, feeling like they *deserve* to be punished. Children will be left feeling vengeful, hostile, angry, and upset about getting punished that they will not be able to learn from their mistakes or rectify their wrongdoing.

According to Ginott, "punishment does not deter misconduct...when a child is punished he resolves to be more careful, not more honest and responsible" (as cited in Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.101). Punishment does not instill good values; it just teaches our children to avoid us better next time.

Furthermore, Dr. Irwin A. Hyman wrote that punishment does not help children develop the inner controls necessary in a democracy (as cited in Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.101).

Moreover, Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs wrote:

> Reality demands that we apply new methods to influence and to motivate children to cooperate. Punishment such as spanking, slapping, humiliating, depriving and generally putting children down are outdated and ineffective means of disciplining children. (as cited in Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.101)

Similarly, Dr. Albert Bandura wrote, “Punishment can control misbehavior, but by itself it will not teach desirable behavior or even reduce the desire to misbehave” (as cited in Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.101).

These statements show just how regressive punishment is. It does not help our children or us. It makes them feel bad and does not help them move forward productively.

Kohn wrote that punishment just makes children more self-centered (2005). When punishment is the main focus, children lose sight of the fact that their actions affect others, because punishment can make them self-centered and only concerned about what the consequences will be for them. Then they are distracted from the important issues, only focusing on how angry they are at whoever punished them. It becomes a game of emotions and revenge instead of learning and understanding cause and effect.

Kohn also writes that punishment, “eventually loses its effectiveness” (2005, p.68). The effects of punishments are short lived, compared to actually learning from mistakes. This quote came to life for me in my daily life. Walking down the streets of Manhattan, New York, in 2016, I heard one mother say to another (with kids in tow), “I’m running out of punishments!” She sounded tired and slightly sarcastic. Punishments do not last, and she knew that! Yet, she was handing them out all day, it seemed. It might be something we are used to doling out but it is ineffective and counter-productive.

If we want to help our children and students learn from and rectify their mistakes and really learn how to be accountable for themselves, then we should not quarantine

them, or in today's terms give them a "time-out," because they will not be able to learn and apply new skills that way. Rather, we should express our disapproval (Faber and Mazlish, 2003), state our expectations for what the child *should* be doing, and explain how they can make amends to the situation. We can also let them experience the consequences of their own behavior, which teaches more than punishment.

The teacher or parent should use his or her discretion to modify or change these strategies, though, depending on children's ages. For example, concrete phrases with facial expressions and tone should be used to help students and children comprehend that what they did was not okay. But the teacher or parent should not use anger as a tool in this process, which may engender guilt and make the children feel bad about themselves.

As far as helping toddlers make amends after a wrong-doing, a "body-check" (a method I use in my classroom) can be used to help them learn about cause and effect in these situations. When a child hurts another, we encourage the child to "check" the other's body to see if s/he is okay (along with facial expression and tone to emphasize that for example, hitting is not okay). This shows children the cause and effect of their actions on others' bodies. And if they are mature toddlers, teachers can have a discussion with them about what to do further to help the child they hurt.

If we feel that a child's body is being unsafe, then we can give him or her something called a "body-break" and explain that right now his or her body is not being safe and therefore cannot be with the group; however, once he or she is ready he or she can come back. This method gives the child the opportunity to cool down while still

feeling that he or she is welcome to join when he or she is physically and emotionally ready.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) said that this form of collaboration instead of punishment will more likely leave a child feeling like a good person even if he or she did something wrong. They will be more likely to try to find a way to make it right, too.

An Altered Perspective

The range of the parenting and teaching perspectives in this literature review spans demonstrates that some styles and opinions overlap or greatly differ from one another. The weight placed on the parents' and teachers' impacts on children pushes the reflective parent and/or teacher to evaluate his or her mode of discipline.

To begin this reflective process, let's ask ourselves honestly, as Kohn wrote: "What are your long-term objectives for your children?" (2005, p.3).

It is a good question and may seem deceptively simple to answer: "we want our kids to become successful people." Parents in Kohn's workshops answered: "happy, balanced, independent, fulfilled, productive, self-reliant, responsible, functioning, kind, thoughtful, loving, inquisitive, and confident" (Kohn, 2005, p.3). But how do we *actually* help our kids become their strongest selves?

Do we look for what works immediately or what will work in the long run? Kohn (2005) referred to controlling modes of managing children as "effective parenting," a method to get our kids to do what *we* want, immediately and without consideration of their wants and needs.

Getting kids to do what *we* want should not be mistaken for helping them develop as people. “Effective” parenting includes punishments like spanking and scolding. We might be successful in controlling our kids with these methods but does that really help us or them in the long term?

It is interesting because, according to social psychologist Elizabeth Cagan’s review of parenting books in the 1980’s, she noticed that overall there was “a blanket acceptance of parental prerogative,” with little “serious consideration of a child’s needs, feelings, or development.” The assumption made in these works was that parent’s desires “are automatically legitimate,” and the only question was how to make kids do what they were told (as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.4).

Effective parenting is not the right path to achieving our goals for our children. We want our kids to believe in their choices, not to make choices because they feel like they have to! (Kohn, 2003). Moreover, by trying to control them with punishments they will, “...behave more out of fear of punishment than desire to please. As a result, they develop no inner controls” (Sears and Sears, 1995, p.3). Punishment and pushing them to do what we want will not help them become self-disciplined people in the long run.

The trouble is that many educators and parents, like ourselves stumble by trying to control their children. This occurs because we often have expectations for them in that they should be compliant at all times, always doing what *we* wish them to do. Whether we realize it or not, a common default vision of a perfect child is one that does what s/he is told without putting up a fight. We may not realize how unfair our expectations are for our children and students.

Many of us have habits of discipline that are more adult-friendly than child-friendly and that no matter how hard we try to let go of them, these habits might still creep into our practices. “Ensuring that children internalize our values is not the same thing as helping them to develop their own” (Kohn, 2005, p.6). In order to help them develop their own values, we have to step back and re-think how to interact in a non-controlling way. We must allow them to think and do for themselves, within reasonable age-appropriate limits, so that they can accomplish as we hope and not be people who are “the kind who accept things as they are,” but rather “the kind who try to make things better” (Kohn, 2005, p.8).

Therefore, we need to steer clear of focusing on what is convenient for *us* and rather, focus on what our children *need*. We need to change our strategies for discipline from “doing-to” to “working-with” (Kohn, 2005). Our goals for our children to be happy, balanced, independent, fulfilled, productive, self-reliant, responsible, functioning, kind, thoughtful, loving, inquisitive, and confident should be in the back of our minds when we discipline our children. We must think, “How can I act and speak in this interaction or deal with this tantrum in a way that will help my child develop autonomy and healthy inner controls to be their own successful person now and in the future?”

A self-reliant, confident, kind and thoughtful person needs to be able to act according to reason and logic that they discovered to be true, not be mindlessly obedient. An independent, productive, balanced and loving person thinks about his or her life deeply and does not do things simply because he was told to. We want our children to feel safe enough to experiment, make mistakes and try again and again.

What Do I Do Now? Reflection, Introspection and Honesty

"Critical to truly seeing and understanding the children we teach, is the courage to reflect on our own behavior" (Cohen, Stern, Balaban & Gropper, 2008, p.97). In other words, it is vital for every teacher to think reflectively and to wonder about what would make his or her practice better. He or she should ask him/herself, "How can I improve the way I interact with my students?"

This study came about because I asked myself this very question. Continuously asking myself this question makes me a better teacher than I was the day before. It is not easy. *Real* reflection is *hard*.

Reflection means thinking about my interactions with the children, as well as my interactions with my co-teachers, very seriously. How do I interact with the children when I'm happy, confident, angry, stressed or sad? All of these aspects of my discourse culminate into the picture of who I am as an educator.

Compassionate Discipline: The Birth of a Teaching Style

It is with my newfound vision of what discipline can and should be that I formulated the optimal teaching practice: compassionate discipline. I created this vision of discipline, based on extensive research and practical experience. This philosophy incorporates all the important aspects of respect for children and the facilitation of their growth as people.

Compassionate discipline involves a balance of giving children validation, choices and opportunities for growth, while maintaining certain limits to keep them safe. My philosophy behind compassionate discipline is based on the writings of Alfie Kohn, Adele Faber, Elaine Mazlish, Garry Landreth, Isaura Barrera, Lucinda Kramer, and other experts in the fields of psychology and education.

I analyzed and synthesized their teaching and parenting strategies, and along with my own thoughts created my vision of compassionate discipline.

The three levels of compassionate discipline are:

1. Respect

2. Collaboration

3. Limitation

First, **respect** children and be open to their needs even if those needs are different than what we had in mind. Second, **collaborate** with them, ask honest questions and hear their input. Third, **limit** children in a respectful, non-intrusive manner.

Punishment is not part of compassionate discipline. I researched extensively on the topic and only found it to be harmful more than helpful. Therefore, these strategies are intentionally used as a way for the parent or teacher to avoid having to use punishment. Rather than punitive measures, the teacher or parent uses logic, love and opportunities for autonomy and involvement.

Compassionate Discipline: The Strategies

The following section of this study will explain the compassionate discipline strategies in depth and show their importance.

- **Respect: Accepting Differences and Honoring Individuality**
- **Collaborate: Working *With***
- **Set Limits Respectfully**

Interwoven between the explained strategies will be anecdotes gathered, as part of my data collection.

Theory on the Ground

Data Collection

I gathered literature on the topic, read, analyzed and synthesized it. Then I decided on the strategies I found from the literature that I wanted to apply in my classroom settings. I recorded anecdotes of what happened when I used the strategies in challenging situations with my students. I hand-wrote my notes as well as recorded them on my phone. I used the template below to gather research by hand.

I used the template to gather data whenever I used compassionate discipline strategies. I gathered data with two and three-year-olds as well as six and seven-year-olds. The settings were a regular classroom setting and a small group learning setting respectively.

Date:
Strategy Used:
Situation:
Descriptive dialogue:
Outcome/Notes:

I set out, at the start of my data collection process, to use a list of 11 strategies but I couldn't escape from using the many others I had learned about. The original 11 strategies are underlined. Several of the strategies overlap with others. Below is a list of the 30 strategies I used during the process.

Strategies List

From *Unconditional Parenting* (2005)

1. Talk less, ask more
2. Respect
3. Be authentic
4. Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts
5. Don't be rigid
6. Don't stick your no's in unnecessarily
7. Reconsider your requests
8. Put the relationship first

From *How to talk so kids can learn* (2003)

9. Identify the child's feelings
10. Acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word
11. Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior
12. Say it with a word or a gesture
13. Offer a choice
14. Listen to the child's feelings and needs
15. Invite the child to brainstorm with you
16. Describe the problem
17. Describe what you feel
18. Express your feelings and needs
19. State your expectations

20. Be playful (use another voice or accent)
21. Give descriptive praise

From *Unconditional Parenting's* specific list for when kids have to comply

22. Use the least intrusive strategy
23. Be honest with them
24. Explain the rationale
25. Turn it into a game
26. Set an example
27. Give them as much choice as possible

From *Play Therapy: The art of the relationship* (1991)

28. Empathize

From *Skilled Dialogue to Transform Challenging Interactions* (2009)

29. There's always a third choice
30. Choose relationship over control

The anecdotal data is presented in full, in the appendix. A number of the anecdotes, however, are presented within the text to authentically show how I applied the strategies. Each anecdote is valuable, and portrays significant progress from the study whether it is within the text or the appendix.

Respect: Accepting Differences and Honoring Individuality

Respect.

Respect is the foundation of compassionate discipline. We need to accept and respect our children, unconditionally. This is the most vital of the three components of compassionate discipline. It is simple yet extremely profound and becomes even more deeply understood with practice.

Kohn (2005) explained, that parents should love their children unconditionally and not base their love on accomplishments or requirements. This means having the utmost respect for children's individualities: who they are and what they choose.

Supporting children in having strong self-respect will help them be successful so they can "grow up to be ethical, able to sustain healthy relationships, intellectually curious, and fundamentally content with him or herself" (Kohn, 2005, p.122). Truly accepting children for who they are is the foundation of respect. Kohn said that love and respect should not only come when kids are perfectly compliant, but when they act out too—hence the term "unconditionally."

"Children need to be loved as they are, and for who they are. When that happens, they can accept themselves as fundamentally good people, even when they screw up" (Kohn, 2005, p. 11). If we (parents and teachers) show them that we love them even when they make mistakes and when they are difficult to handle, even nearly impossible to handle, then they know they are intrinsically lovable and will be more inclined to love themselves even when they make mistakes in life.

Moreover, as educators we set the tone for respect. “Kids are more likely to respect others (including you) if they themselves feel respected” (Kohn, 2005, p.124). Children learn respect best when they are shown it. To help them feel worthy and strong in their own skin we need to show them respect from a young age.

From this perspective, misbehaviors are perceived as teachable moments rather than moments to assert control and punishment. Furthermore, “we can’t always assume that because we’re more mature we necessarily have more insight into our children than they have into themselves” (Kohn, 2005, p.125). If we truly respect our children, we will be open to the fact that they might know themselves better than we do, even if we are convinced otherwise. They are their own people and know themselves best. We are there to help, not to control, and if we truly want to be facilitators and not dictators, we must respect them.

Respect and acceptance is key for success with children, according to internationally known play therapist Garry L. Landreth, Ed.D., LPC, RPT-S. Landreth is known for his work in children’s play therapy as well as his writings, including *Play Therapy: The Art of the Relationship* (1991). Landreth’s therapeutic techniques were included in this study because he promotes child-centered play therapy, similar to what we as educators try to accomplish: to create a child-centered disciplinary experience. Landreth wrote that the successful play therapist should—with respect and acceptance—center therapy around the child, not the therapist.

“A child will not change until the child is free not to change” (Landreth, 1991, p.107). That means that a therapist working with a child will only see change in the child

if they truly decide not to expect it, not to force it. That has to come from having a deep respect and acceptance for the child as s/he is right now. Only then, might the child change, says Landreth. This advice is strong for the educator. To decide that we do not need to change our students or children is more challenging than it may seem. It might feel natural to assume that we know better than they do what is best for them. But truly respecting children means stepping back and appreciating who they are without trying to change them.

Furthermore, Landreth wrote:

> The therapist does not wish the child were different in some way. The child is enough at this moment. The objective of the therapist is to create a climate in which the child feels free to be fully who she is at the moment in the shared experience of learning about self and each other. (1991, p.107)

To learn, to teach, to accomplish in the classroom, starts with respect for each child. The acceptance of the child's whole being makes for a safe space where the child can breathe easily.

Real acceptance.

Acceptance practically means realizing that who they are is who they are supposed to be right now. Nothing more, nothing less.

> The play therapist is not a person who tries to make things happen, for that is not an option within the possibilities that exist in reality. To *make* happen or *create for* others the inner wisdom necessary for living life simply is not possible. Whatever is important or necessary for children's growth already exists in children. The therapist's role or responsibility is not to reshape children's lives or make them change in some predetermined way but, rather, to respond in ways that facilitate release of the creative potential that already exists in them. (Landreth, 1991, p.111)

Landreth makes the crucial point that when we truly accept our children—we stop trying to shape them. We stop trying to create something for them and of them. They are who they are and they have within them what they need. We are outside of them and we are there to facilitate—not to create.

"Caring acceptance," Landreth's (1991) technique, "grows out of a genuine and sincere interest in children, a sensitivity to their rights, and a belief that they can assume responsibility for themselves" (p. 213). Care and acceptance means honestly respecting the child's wants and needs.

Be open to their needs.

We might theoretically respect and accept our children and students, but how do we *exhibit* those ideals practically? The answer is that we must be open to children's needs, however diverse, surprising, odd, and unexpected as they may be. Our children have needs and emotions that we do not always understand or want to accept. But we *need* to validate them because all people deserve validation, which helps us grow, similar to the way sunlight and water helps plants grow.

We need to be open to children's need for feeling emotions. Feeling is a human need and denying their feelings is disrespectful and will only negatively impact them, making them feel less worthy. For example, if a child says s/he hates something and we respond, "Why would you say that?" we are rejecting his or her feelings and writing them off. This might bring the child to believe that his or her feelings are unimportant or that there is something wrong with him or her for having them. Worse yet, he or she may believe that he can only be loved if he gets upset about the things his or her parents approve of as being upsetting (Kohn, 2005).

Even if a child is feeling negatively or positively about something that we just cannot seem to understand, we need to take a step back before assuming their feelings are unreasonable. Our task is to notice that this is something unique about this child that deserves to be respected. He or she is a person with likes and dislikes which may be different from our own and that is not only okay, but needs to be respected.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) advised teachers to accept children's feelings because it will help children feel good and impact their behavior positively. There is a "direct connection between how kids feel and how they behave, when kids feel right, they'll behave right. How do we help them to feel right? By accepting their feelings!" (p.23).

It is all interwoven, to respect is to accept and to accept is to be open to their needs and differences; ultimately, to believe in them as human beings.

Listen to the child's feelings and needs.

Kohn (2005) instructed us to listen to the child's feelings and needs, which means to actively accommodate their needs as well as to listen to them. We learn how to listen from Landreth's writings:

"I will listen fully with my ears and eyes to everything about the child, what is expressed and what is not expressed. I want to hear the child completely...as well as to understand the child's experiences and feelings," (Landreth, 1991, p. 210). Landreth encouraged the therapist to immerse him or herself in the child's words to fully hear what the child is saying and to understand who he or she is.

Sometimes we listen without really hearing. Children's words deserve to be heard and their worlds to be understood. We need to listen like we want to hear them. This may pose as a challenge because it feels so much like we know better, but that will cause invalidation.

Furthermore, Faber and Mazlish (2003) strongly advised us to listen without judgment. "Our job is to create that sense of safety...to make sure they know they won't

get into trouble for telling us what they've done or be condemned for what they feel" (p.128). By listening open-mindedly and open-heartedly we are creating a foundation of trust in us for our children and students.

#17: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Listen to the child's feelings and needs/ Set an example/ Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Music time on the rug, Child 1was crying and lunging at Child 2 because he wanted his seat.
Descriptive dialogue: Child 1 had hurt his nose a moment before and he wanted Child 2's seat. He was crying and lunging at Child 2 saying, "I wanna sit there!" He was trying to hit him or get him out of that chair with physical force. Me: I held him back, but he kept trying to get out of my arms, so I picked him up and we walked outside of the circle (on the rug). I got down onto my knees at eye level with him. I held up three fingers for him to blow out because his 3rd birthday was that morning. I said, "Let's breathe in 3 big breaths and blow out three birthday candles...breathe in, breathe out." I breathed deeply in and out the first two times for him; he was very close to my chest so he felt it and breathed with me for the the third. He calmed down a lot. Then I said, "Okay, you want to sit in that chair, but (Child 2's name) is sitting there. The one next to him is open, though, can you go ask him now if you can sit there?"

Outcome/Notes: He asked so nicely and then sat down. I was so happy!

I didn't punish him for screaming or force him to leave because he wanted to sit there and was trying to hit Child 2 to get the spot. He had just gotten hurt *and* really wanted to sit in that spot, so he just really needed help regulating his body. I heard his needs and helped him regulate his body enough to get what he needed in an appropriate way. We cooled down together and I helped him find his words. At first he wasn't ready to breathe with me, so I modeled for him to take deep breaths, to help him do it too when he could. Those first two breaths helped him start to calm down even though I was modeling it for him. The child was never shamed for being angry, only acknowledged and guided to express his needs appropriately.

Identify the child's feelings.

The process of helping children to hear themselves is an aspect of "listening" and another method of self-regulation. Faber and Mazlish (2003) advised us to identify the child's feelings, because that will help them understand what emotions they are feeling and what they are going through. Children might not know the words to use to express their feelings and our job is to help them. Giving them the vocabulary to understand their emotions gives them power to voice their emotions and feelings and helps them feel safer with their emotions.

#5: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior/Explain the rationale/Identify the child's feelings/Acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word.
Situation: Child was adamantly saying no to the potty.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "You're so angry! Grrrr. You're frustrated. You don't want to go potty, but (child's name) sometimes our pee needs to come and we don't even realize it (point to my head)! So we need to try and go potty and see if it comes. Even though we don't need to, we try! We go pee so then you can play, play, play. First you go pee—you just try and see, and then you can play, play, play."
Outcome/Notes: Eventually the child went to potty. The strategies gave the child understanding of why we need to go the potty while also concretizing her feelings and validating her.

Acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word.

As you listen, if you acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word that shows that you are really listening (Faber and Mazlish, 2003), the child feels understood and safe enough to unload the burden of his or her emotions.

#53: Small Group Learning Setting Anecdote
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Child refused to partake in a project.
Descriptive dialogue: Child: "Nononono! I don't want to do that!!!" I won't do that!" Me: Very calmly I responded, "(Child's name) you're really not interested in that. I can talk to you about that in a minute and we can work something out for you."
Outcome/Notes: This reaction validated him and helped him cool down from being tense. Since we didn't speak about it for a few minutes while I worked with other children, he had more time to transition from being tense to calm.

Empathize.

Children, and all human beings, need empathy. Once we are able to accept and respect our children we can really *be with*[2] them during hardships.

"When a person is drowning, it's not the time to give swimming lessons" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.38). Problem solving, or as Faber and Mazlish put it, "swimming lessons" are important, but, empathy enables the child to share the burden of heavy feelings. To feel, makes it possible to heal and then to move on. Children can figure out

[2] "Be with" is a phrase adapted from Landreth's (1991) phrase "being with" (p.212). It means to feel with, or stand with a child in his or her experience without an attitude of evaluation.

what to do to solve their own problems if they are *allowed* to. But in times of distress they need a hand to hold—a person to feel the pain *with* them.

However, genuineness is imperative. There is nothing worse than someone that listens to you complain and says, "I know what you mean," when they really do not or when they shoot advice back immediately without really hearing your perspective. Faber and Mazlish (2003) advised teachers, "instead of criticism, questions, and advice, accept and reflect feelings and wishes" (p.41). One feels understood when others listen without judgment and with real empathy.

The experts explained further that even if a teacher has good intentions by giving criticism and advice when a student is expressing feelings it is not as effective as "acknowledging the student's distress with an attitude of concern" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, P.30). Practically, if a teacher gives an occasional nod or gesture showing understanding, this frees the child because s/he is empathized with and can solve the problem on his or her own.

Moreover, they explained that without empathy, our children cannot concentrate because they are upset. Learning anew is impossible in that state. "If we want to free their minds to think and learn, then we have to deal respectfully with their emotions" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.36).

Landreth (1991) referred to empathy as a "healing message" which is necessary for a successful therapeutic relationship with a child. On that note, the teacher should

think, “I am here—I want to enter fully into the child’s world” (p.209). And through this process we want the child to know that we really care about him or her.

But perhaps the most impactful statement Landreth made on empathy is about *really* trying to “be” in the child’s world.

> Seldom do adults strive to understand the child’s immediate internal frame of reference, the child’s subjective world, to genuinely be with the child...Children are not free to explore, to test boundaries, to share frightening parts of their lives, or to change until they experience a relationship in which their subjective experiential world is understood and accepted. (1991, p.213)

If we truly accept, listen and empathize, we can set our children free to be who they need to be. By trying to meet them where they are, by just being there to show support and to listen, we help them move forward as stronger people. Landreth concluded, “The therapist’s empathic responses communicate understanding and acceptance to children, thus freeing them to be more creative and expressive” (1991, p.213).

#32: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Empathize/Accept the child’s feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior
Situation: Child was upset about his snack. I sat with him in the hall to help him calm down.
Descriptive dialogue:

Child: at snack, was screaming and crying. He collapsed to his knees on the floor because he was so upset about his snack [it wasn't entirely clear what bothered him—either having to wait for "seconds" on snack or the fact that his crackers were broken]. My co-teachers and I encouraged him to wait and use his words but he was so angry, sad and frustrated. I brought him outside into the hall with his snack and held him on my lap while he cried. I held him tight, holding him in a big hug, and helped him to calm his body and be ready to eat his snack.
Outcome/Notes: He calmed down after a few minutes and was ready to go back in to the classroom to eat his snack. This moment was really all about being with him—where he was. He was extremely emotional and upset. He was so dis-regulated and needed someone to validate him and hear his needs to *feel* his emotions in that moment. So the two of us sat in the hall, where it was quiet, and I held him. We sat for a couple of minutes and I really felt his sadness for whatever was bothering him. He was ready to go back in after that.

Respecting our children and students unconditionally is key. Real acceptance means to recognize their individuality and accommodate their diverse needs. Furthermore, teachers and parents show respect through empathizing with their students and children, in order to help them navigate emotional experiences. Identifying and acknowledging children's feelings prepares them learn to aid themselves.

Collaborate: Working *With*

The opportunity for collaboration comes up everywhere and all the time with our children, and students, ranging from before bath time at home to activity time in the classroom. Collaboration appears in conflicts, arguments and power struggles between ourselves and our children or between them and their peers, siblings, and/or classmates.

Meaning, if our children and/or students do not want to follow a rule, if they fight with a peer, or do something they should not be doing, a teacher or parent should utilize that moment as a forum for collaboration with the child, rather than asserting control without considering the child's needs. The following strategies are suggested for use in these moments, so we can move away from "doing to" (Kohn, 2005) strategies and move towards "working with" strategies with our children and students.

DISCLAIMER: Teachers and parents should use their judgment for utilizing the collaboration strategies. If it is not the time to collaborate because a child's body is unsafe then that is an appropriate time to implement a "do to them" strategy to stop a situation without discussion. For example, the parent or teacher may find it necessary to remove the child if s/he hurting someone (i.e., biting, hitting). The bottom line is to collaborate whenever possible but only if it is a reasonable time to do so. Therefore, once a child's body is safe then that would be the time to *work with* the child.

Don't be rigid!

Kohn encouraged educators and parents not to be so stuck in our ways. He said that there are great benefits to not being so rigid. "It's amazing how much less stressed

and defensive everyone is, and how there's less pressure to insist on a uniform definition of justice" (2005, p.137).

"Don't be rigid!" can be a challenging strategy to implement because it might feel like we, teachers, know what is best and that is it! But the truth is, we do not. Our students are part of the equation and we need to consider their needs. Real flexibility means creating solutions for difficult conflicts and not sticking to the same solutions we used last time because it is "the way we do things." Practically, this might necessitate changing a rule for a child if it is just not working for him or her. Honestly, sometimes things can be changed and we just do not want to change them.

But, is it worthwhile to be rigid all the time? If a child wants to do something that you would never say "yes" to but now they want to, why not reconsider if this "rule" is actually vital? Perhaps, the child *needs* this. Perhaps the rule is not that important except for the the fact that it has never been changed before. Be flexible. It is more honest and, as Kohn (2005) wrote, it is liberating to not have to stick to a framework that sometimes is meaninglessly permanent.

Practically, a situation could be where a child wants to use a bike at the playground but you have already banned the bikes for the day because it rained recently and the ground is wet, you are nervous that the bikes might slip. You take a look around, and see that it's not so wet and notice that the kids really want to bike, you can either stick to what you said because as a teacher you need to do that or you can be flexible and tell the children that you realized it is not very wet and they can bike. Flexibility should be considered where it counts.

#3: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Don't be rigid!/ There's always a third choice.
Situation: Child wanted to touch his genitalia while I changed his diaper, I said, "No!" because, although there was nothing dirty in that area, I felt it wasn't exactly clean to touch. He became upset and sad. I changed my mind and said he could do it, and he was happy.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "No! You can't touch your penis!" I scratched his stomach accidentally because I grabbed his hand away from touching himself. He looked like he was going to cry so I said, very genuinely, "I'm so sorry. I really scared you." Then I hugged him and continued, "But you can't touch your penis because it makes your hands dirty." Child: On the verge of tears, "But I want to touch it." Me: I paused and thought for a moment. Then I said, "Okay, you can touch your penis." Child: Smiled and was happy. He touched his penis for a few seconds. Me: "Okay! Say, 'I'll see you later!'" Child: he put it down and said, "I'm fixing it." Me: I finished putting on his diaper, and then helped him wash his hands and return to class.
Outcome/Notes: The child left feeling validated, happy and allowed to do something that he wanted to do because, after all, it *is* the bathroom, the place appropriate for this. This was a proud moment for me because I chose not to be rigid in what I thought was okay. I am aware that to some people it might seem like I have gone too far. But I have not. Every

human is entitled to his or her own body. Adults take care of their body's needs in the bathroom and children are entitled to take care of themselves as well. I chose not to be rigid here, all the more so, because we were *in the bathroom*, the place where having privacy for one's own body is allowed. It seemed at first like there weren't many choices in the situation but after I thought for a moment, I realized that there was another solution if I opened my mind up to it.

Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts.

If we want to collaborate honestly we need to abandon our assumptions of our children. Kohn (2005) said that children create an idea in their minds of what their motives are, based in part on what our assumptions about their motives are, and they act accordingly. This notion is powerful to think about. They can sense what we are thinking of them and that affects them. We need to clear our assumptions to give them liberty.

> Even when parents don't say out loud that the child must have acted as he did because he's stupid or destructive or bad, it matters if they believe this is true. It's not just the attributions we utter that matter but the ones we make in our heads. (Kohn, 2005, p.131)

This is a strong statement that rings true for many of us. How many times have we gotten involved in our kids' fights and assumed right away who the culprit and the victim was? Kohn's message is humbling to think about, and yet is so important to ingrain in ourselves.

The danger of making assumptions is brought up by Kohn (2005): "Though we may never speak an unkind word about our children, assumptions about their motives invariably affect the way we treat them" (p.131). It is not fair to them to let our assumptions cloud our judgments and all the more so our interactions with them.

If we think about the effect that others' thoughts have on our own selves, as *adults*, how much more so might our thoughts affect our children? If we attribute the best possible motives consistent with the facts, or in other words, look at situations based on the facts *in front of us* rather than assuming anything based on our preconceived notions, then we are really open and available for collaboration. If we are not approaching our children anew and with openness, then we are not really collaborating.

#30: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts.
Situation: Child looks like he might throw something at another child.
Descriptive dialogue: I waited to see what would happen. I tried not to let past experiences with him throwing things at children cloud my judgment. It wasn't a given that he'd throw something; therefore, I resisted running over and stopping him.
Outcome/Notes: He threw something at the child. This was a learning experience for me. Although I really didn't want to assume wrongly and risk making him feel bad about himself, I

need to be realistic. This strategy doesn't instruct us to "ignore the facts;" it means we should be consistent with the facts. It's a difficult place to be in, because I didn't want to run over and scare him by stopping him or holding him back when he's about to do something that may or may not be a danger for other children. Ultimately, it's educational for him, if I do stop him; it's about *how* I do it that matters, because considering the "facts" and past experiences with certain children, I have to be smart. Safety is important and hurting others is never okay.

Talk less, ask more.

To set the scene for this strategy, assume two children or students are screaming and something has just happened but we are not quite sure what. We run over and "talk less ask more" meaning we ask the children questions instead jumping to quick conclusions.

There is nothing more frustrating than when someone asks, "What happened?" after or during a conflict, when they are not really listening for an answer and instead, they just keep saying things to try to fix the situation because they assume they know what happened. We need to ask questions in moments like these and not make assumptions and talk when we should be listening.

In conflicts that our children go through, we need to try to understand the many surrounding details, such as the antecedents and the stimuli in the environment. "As a rule, our first priority is to figure out the source for the problem to recognize what children need" (Kohn, 2005, p.127). The more we ask, and actually listen instead of

assume, the better chance there is that we can understand why a conflict started and what our child needs in the situation in order to learn.

> We need to be detectives, open to finding things out we don't expect.
>
> Sometimes the reasons for troublesome actions are a function of a specific child or situation. When kids are too young to explain—or, in some cases, even to understand—those reasons, we have to piece together the clues that might help us make sense of what's going on. (Kohn, 2005, p.128)

According to Barbara Coloroso, author of *Kids are Worth It!* some questions, "get us nowhere fast" and we might want to think about why we are asking those questions in the first place (Kohn, 2005, p.129). Let us rethink our questions. What are we asking and why? Are we looking for a specific answer? Are we really open to our child's answer, even if it is different from what we expect or want it to be? Does our tone, facial expression, and body language show that we are open to the child's answer?

Kohn (2005) made a point that is humbling and crucial. "It's when we're not entirely sure what the child will say, and when we're open to more than one response, that a question is most likely to be beneficial" (p.129). As experienced teachers, we know our kids' behavior patterns and it seems to make so much sense to approach conflicts in our classroom with each child's history in mind (whether they usually hit, bite etc.). But how fair is that? Kohn said that we should really truly ask questions and be ready for an answer we are not expecting. As I have said before, children know

themselves best. We must respect that, and *ask* accordingly. If we are open, then we just might be surprised.

Moreover, when our children are part of conflicts, we need to really view them holistically, not just for their current behavior. We need to empathize and *be with* them to understand their perspectives; otherwise, Landreth (1991) warned, "When you focus on a problem, you lose sight of the child" (p.80). With this in mind, we must be wary of *what* we ask and *how* we ask. Meaning, we should not just try to target the problematic behavior with a pointed question that shows where our assumptions lie—that the child did something wrong! Instead, we should ask questions to get a feel for what *else* may have happened that set a child off. Sometimes we need to reconsider our questions and words altogether.

#39: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more.
Situation: We were having a group rug activity and the Child was sitting in the corner of the room when he wasn't supposed to be. I genuinely asked him why he was there and we had a conversation.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I pulled up a chair to where he was and sat in front of him and asked, "Can I sit with you for a bit?" Child: "Yeah"

Me: “I like sitting with you.” I barely addressed the fact that he was supposed to be elsewhere. I talked with him a bit about other things and then I genuinely asked, “What are you doing over here? I see you’re sitting over here.”

Child: “I just need to rest my body.”

Then we were able to just talk a little bit with each other about how we were doing, joked around and then I said, “Okay, are you ready?”

Child: “Yea, I’m ready.”

Me: “Okay great!” I called him with the “Willaby Wallaby” song to go to the table.

Outcome/Notes: Then we went over to the table for lunch.

This wasn’t easy for me to do. I wanted (very badly) to tell him immediately to go to the rug. He knew the activity was happening and that he needed to be there. But I knew this child well. He often liked to leave the group activities to do what he wanted on his own. I took a patient, understanding route with him because I thought I might have more success that way. What’s the point of forcing him to the rug? He would have just run away again and it would have been unproductive. This way, he saw that I trusted and cared about him and took his needs seriously because I let him stay for a minute while his body rested. Then I told him calmly that he needed to go to lunch. He was given time, patience and validation and he came around to getting up on his own without me forcing him to with bad feelings.

Reconsider your requests.

The common thread between the collaboration strategies is being open: open to abandon assumptions, open to listen, open to change our behavior patterns so we can meet our children's needs with respect.

Still, the notion of reconsidering requests might be a hard one to swallow. Whether you are a humble or proud teacher it does not matter, because going back on your word is **difficult**. It can be a real challenge, but if what we are doing turns out to be developmentally inappropriate or just inappropriate for that specific situation, reconsideration may be the right thing to do. For example, you just announced to the two and three-year-olds that they need to clean up all the beans they dumped out of the bean table. Some students resist strongly and just say, "No!" some start to clean up but go so slowly that you see they will never get all of the beans off the floor. Even though it may have seemed like a good lesson of cause and effect and to help them learn why dumping beans on the floor is not a good idea, it can be too many beans for them to pick up. So, you should reconsider your request and change it to a more practical task, like asking that they each pick up ten beans. This way they can still learn the lesson of cleaning up when they make a mess but in a way that is developmentally appropriate for them.

Kohn (2005) advised us to reconsider our requests by saying, "Perhaps when your child doesn't do what you're demanding, the problem isn't with the child but with what it is you're demanding" (p.121). Kohn continued, "If the whole process is excruciating for the child, why are you forcing him…? Is it for him, or for you?" (p.122). As mentioned earlier, this notion is hard to swallow because no parent or teacher wants to see

themselves as insisting that their kids to do things for the parent's own benefit, and yet it happens all the time.

It is difficult not to want to control our kids or students when life, or the classroom, is hectic. Control makes calm, right? Maybe, but that is merely "effective parenting," which is something we do just to make our kids listen so things run smoothly. Ultimately, it does not help them learn or develop as people.

Furthermore, "before searching for some method to get kids to do what we tell them, we should first take the time to rethink the value or necessity of our request" (Kohn, 2005, p.122). We must reflect deeply on the kinds of things we are asking of our children and why. Is it absolutely necessary? If so, for them or for us?

This strategy means that we need to evaluate our requests with child development in mind. We need to notice deeply how different situations affect our children and how certain requests may be incorrect for some situations even if they are right for others. With all this in mind, we need to think if our requests are inappropriate or "just right."

#46: Small Group Learning Setting Anecdote
Strategy Used: Reconsider your requests/ Don't stick your no's in unnecessarily.
Situation: Child refused to partake in the map project, even though he was excited about it when I told him about it after class the week before.
Descriptive dialogue:

Me: I was explaining the project to the class. Child: interrupted me and said, "I'm not doing it." three separate times during my instructions for the class. Me: I responded a few times, "Okay, one moment." Then I spoke with him privately and whispered, "What do you want to do instead?" Child: he said he wanted to free draw. Me: I asked him, "What can you do that still has (the map) in it? You need to know the four cities." Child: he said he'd do (city name) in Minecraft (as a drawing). Me: "How about (city name) *and* (another city name)?" Child: he became happy and enthusiastic and started working on his drawing.
Outcome/Notes: He enjoyed it and even wanted to bring it home! I was very flexible with him and this allowed him to still learn about the topic, just a little differently. I had wanted him to learn four cities and he only did two, but I thought it was worth it for him to learn more happily. He was so excited and connected to the work that he did. It gave him a positive association with the learning experience, more than forcing him to do it how it was originally planned.

Don't stick your no's in unnecessarily.

This strategy (Kohn, 2005) forces us to reflect on the necessity of all of our "no's." How often are we objecting to our children's activities? Is "putting our foot

down" an action too rampant in our teaching and parenting? In fact, Dumas and LaFreniere found that mothers of preschoolers will command or disapprove of their children's actions every few minutes (as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.133).

"Not sticking our no's in unnecessarily" means rethinking our limits altogether. In light of this finding, Kohn (2005) wrote, "we may tell kids to stop doing things that are actually pretty harmless, or we may say no automatically when they propose something out of the ordinary" (p.134). Are we limiting our children and students because they are trying to do things that are dangerous or wrong? Or are we just uncomfortable with the change in routine?

Kohn (2005) advised, "don't say no if you don't absolutely have to, and try to think about the reason for everything you say" (p.136). This strategy means practicing and working hard to be intentional with our "no's," and to be purposeful about holding them back. This might seem like a daunting undertaking. How can we think so deeply into every single "no," especially since research shows we say it extremely often? This strategy does not mean to say "yes" to everything.

It means having a shift in perspective when it comes to monitoring our children. It means reflecting on the "no's" we usually hand out throughout the day. Once we adjust our perspective and practice a few times, we will come to see that many of the things our children and students are pursuing, that we object to, are in fact, harmless. They might even be activities that are conducive to their growth. Try to be open to more "yes's."

We might be saying “no” in some cases because we know that what the child is doing will not work out, based on experience. But as long as it is not a dangerous thing, we need to let the natural consequences of a situation be a learning experience for children without our involvement. As Kohn (2005) wrote, “there are more than enough opportunities for learning to deal with limits, for confronting the fact that it’s impossible to get everything one wants” (p.135). Life, itself is a good enough teacher that children will learn that not everything they want will or can work out. Children do not need teachers and parents to constantly try to teach them that lesson.

That being said, use your judgment when it comes to safety: stick your “no’s” in and use physical action if something unsafe is happening that is time-sensitive. But be honest and intentional. You will see that those emergencies are sparser than we realize. Let us be less loose with the “no’s” and save them for real emergencies.

#47: Small Group Learning Setting Anecdote
Strategy Used: Don’t stick your no’s in unnecessarily.
Situation: Child asked to bring his brother into the class while he colored. At first I said, “okay,” but then, “no,” because he needed to color; it often took him a long time to do his work and then he would get upset when he didn’t finish on time. He wanted this, though, and asked sincerely.
Descriptive dialogue: Child: “Can I bring in (child’s brother’s name)?”

Me: “Okay. Actually, no, you need to finish.” Child: “Please, he can color…” Me: I thought for a moment and then said, “Okay fine. Sure. If you want.”
Outcome/Notes: In this moment, I let go of some control and basically said, “Okay, why not?” showing an element of trust. I realized that it seemed like this would make him happy and it was his choice if he cut down coloring time for himself. He brought his brother in and completely took on the roll of caretaker. He told his brother to color about a certain topic, which was the lesson I had just taught! He explained the lesson to him and gave instructions for what kind of scene he should draw. He colored his own project and his brother did his. He said to his brother, “wow great job, nice coloring, (brother’s name)!” Ultimately, it helped him so much to have his brother there. He became a leader and grew. He was so calm. It made the time exponentially better for him because he retaught the lesson and really internalized it!

There’s always a third choice.

The theme of being open and ready to collaborate continues with this strategy. When working with children in a conflict, for example, if a child has hit someone, we must bear in mind that the situation is not black or white. There are different ways to solve the same issue and different possibilities for what actually transpired before we entered the scene.

Isaura Barrera and Lucinda Kramer (2009) in *Using Skilled Dialogue to Transform Challenging Interactions: Honoring Identity, Voice, & Connection* write, "at the core of responsiveness is the recognition that there are always more than two choices" (p.46). This means that we need to be able to permit our children to "uncover who they are rather than shaping them into who we want or need them to be" according to Freedman and Combs (as cited in Barrera and Kramer, 2009, p.46).

Barrera and Kramer continue, stating that even if we have our preconceived notions of people, and even if we have labeled them accordingly, we can still be open to what they might do differently (2009). People can change and situations might be more flexible than we realize.

Furthermore, the authors encourage us to strongly focus on the potential for solutions. "To be responsive to another is to entertain the possibility of connection rather than follow the certainty of separation. It is to be willing to look beyond obvious contradictions and shift focus from what divides to what connects." (Barrera and Kramer, 2009, p.46) We should see the opportunities for solutions in challenging situations. Rather than seeing these situations as "black and white," we should open our eyes to to diverse possibilities that are for solving the problem at hand, if only we think "outside the box."

Problem solve.

Problem solving together with a child takes collaboration to the next level. We need to invite our children in the process of collaboration, to give them partial control of

the situation. This is a two-sided strategy where both the adult and the child get to work together. The adult should relinquish some control and figure out *with* the child, how to solve the problem.

It should be known that children as young as toddlers can be part of a collaborative problem solving process. The type of language used will be different for a 7-year-old than for a 2.5-year-old but it can and should still happen The opportunity for a child to give input should be provided even for toddlers.

Inviting our children to problem solve sends a powerful message of trust to our children and students:

> "When we invite a child to join us in tackling a problem, we send a powerful set of messages, including, "I believe in you, I trust your ability to think wisely and creatively, I value your contributions..." (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.148).

Furthermore, collaborating with our children and students in the process of finding solutions to problems makes them much more interested in participating and enforcing the new rules.

> "Children may *accept* limits and even acknowledge their value, but what they *need* is to be consulted rather than just constrained. Watch how differently kids react to limits imposed by an adult and...limits they have a voice in determining" (Gordon, as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.179).

Faber and Mazlish outlined several steps for problem solving with children and students:

1. Listen to the child's feelings and needs.

2.Summarize the child's point of view.

3. Express your feelings and needs.

4. Invite the child to brainstorm with you.

5. Write down all ideas-without evaluating.

6.Together decide which ideas you don't like, which you do, and how you plan to put them into action. (2003, p.149)

Step 1 is explained in the first stage of compassionate discipline: Respect. We listen and accept their thoughts. Step 2, we empathize and show that we really heard them in the first place. Faber and Mazlish (2003) also emphasize that, "the first step, hearing the children out, is the most important" (p.137). Time and patience on our part is crucial for this process.

Steps 3-6 are foundational for problem solving and should be modified to be age appropriate.

Express your feelings and needs.

With this strategy, we see that even as adults we should share our feelings and needs because we are part of this problem solving process too and our thoughts matter.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) advised against collaborating when we are angry or stressed. Therefore, in addition to expressing our feelings, we should reflect on our emotions and be honest with ourselves about whether or not we can successfully problem solve with the child at this moment. “Don’t even try to problem solve if you’re feeling rushed or agitated.,.” because, “…in order to tackle a difficult problem successfully, you need time, a clear head and inner calm” (p. 137). The child may have done or said something hurtful to us and if we are still harboring angry feelings, we need to give ourselves time to heal or be aware as we push those feelings aside for the time being.

Invite the child to brainstorm with you.

The teacher or parent should invite the child to brainstorm with him or her about what to do with the current problem and how to move forward in solving it. A discussion with give-and-take on both sides should take place with a strong emphasis on welcoming the child’s input. Faber and Mazlish instructed teachers and parents to “write down all ideas-without evaluating” (2005, p. 149). That means, we can make a big chart and write down the children’s ideas if it is a large group or use a small notebook for a one-on-one interaction. We can even just acknowledge the ideas as they come in, with reflective words, to show validation of them without judgment.

Age may determine if we need a written list or not. A short, concrete discussion might be sufficient for toddlers. If we write them down, we might use full sentences with older children but a visual list with pictures and possibly one-word labels for younger ones. The most important aspect of this strategy is to not judge the ideas as they come in. Rather, try to accept them all as part of the brainstorming process.

We also need to be authentic in the process, because if we are rushing and not really interested in the children's ideas, it is not going to work. We also should exercise great restraint from judging children's ideas here, because it will only make them feel uncomfortable and insecure (Faber and Mazlish, 2003). "If you want to get the wheels of creativity spinning, you have to welcome every idea-no matter how nutty" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.138).

The process is what matters, not the product (Kohn, 2005). This is an opportunity for children to take part in creating a solution for a problem. The more that we take their ideas seriously, the more they will feel that their needs matter to us.

The benefits of children brainstorming *with* us is that they feel ownership and control over the situation. If they are really involved in this problem solving process then they, not we, are responsible for themselves, because they helped create the solution. Together, with the children, we can choose the new solutions. We can guide them towards ideas that are functional but we should be wary of shooting down ideas without letting them discover why they would not work first. This discovery could happen through conversation between peers as they brainstorm or just as they think about it themselves.

Furthermore, the passage of time, as well as trial and error will show the child which strategies were effective and which were not. We want them to be able to learn for themselves.

Moreover, once children are given liberty to make choices themselves, we will see less resistance. “Children are much less likely to resist decisions that they helped to make” (Kohn, 2005, p.176). With experience in this, Faber and Mazlish remarked how their students took charge of monitoring themselves after creating their own rules to improve a situation (2003, p.136).

In addition, Lewis, in an analysis of Baumrind’s data, found that “children are more likely to control themselves if their parents are willing to negotiate and are open to changing their minds in response to children’s arguments” (as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.175). This is truly the goal. To help children become responsible for themselves. We need to give them the strength and support to do so.

#21: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Problem solve/Invite the child to brainstorm with you
Situation: Child 1 was putting his toys in other kids’ faces (including Child 2, his friend).
Descriptive dialogue: We were sitting on the rug in the block area. Child 1 kept pushing his toys into kids’ faces and they didn’t like that. Me: I kept telling him to stop but he wasn’t listening and couldn’t control himself. I tried discussing it with him and hearing his input. I asked him, “What are ways that we can play with friends?” Child 1: “I can play with people; I can play with blocks.”

Me: “Oh, let’s call (Child 2’s name) over, (Child’s 2’s name) do you want to play with (Child 1’s name) when he hits you like that?” Child 2: “Nooo.” Me: to Child 1, “Oh so do you think you should hit him like that?” Child 1: “Nooo.” Me: We discussed it a little more, then I said, “Okay, you can go play, but we do not throw the toys in people’s faces.”
Outcome/Notes: This anecdote is an example of modifying the problem solving process to be age appropriate. I modified the conversation to be open-ended, yet concrete, and for him to be able to be part of the problem solving process without it taking too long causing him to lose interest. He understood the conversation. He was able to learn through partaking in the conversation with me that hitting others impacts him socially. But it seemed that he couldn’t always control his impulses long-term; the learning didn’t always stick for him. Nevertheless, this was a positive, constructive learning moment for him where he got to see, first hand, how his hitting made his own friend not want to play with him; thus helping him understand why he shouldn’t hit with the toys.

Give descriptive praise.

This strategy is part of collaboration because it gives our children accountability for themselves. Giving descriptive praise means describing what the child has done without our evaluation, thereby giving him or her the opportunity to praise him or herself (Faber and Mazlish, 2003). When we give children the tools to recognize for themselves what they are doing, then we help them to be able to praise themselves and participate even more purposefully in the rules thereafter.

For example, if a child did not want to clean up the blocks but then started to, we could describe to them what they are doing, "You're cleaning up the blocks, and showing me with your body that you can take care of your toys!" Now, that child can be proud of him/herself because s/he knows s/he is responsible. If we had said something less descriptive but more evaluative like, "Good job" that makes the praise hinge on our opinions of the child. Descriptive praise affirms children "as they try to understand their world and find their place in it" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.178). It gives them the tools to understand why what they are doing is a good thing.

Collaboration can occur in various forms. It entails the abandonment of assumptions and pre-conceived notions about children, and requires flexibility and openness necessary to approach children's and student's needs. Teachers and parents relinquish partial control to allow children to take ownership over themselves in collaborative scenarios, thus enabling them to learn and grow into thoughtful, responsible people.

Set Limits: Respectfully, With Safety in Mind

This layer of compassionate discipline is extremely important. Respect and collaboration are crucial, but ultimately, limits are necessary to keep us safe. It is about how those limits are created and communicated that sets compassionate discipline apart from other disciplinary methods. We need to think about the necessity of our limits, though. Are we trying to maintain control for *our* sake? Or are they reasonable and appropriate? There is a fine line between being controlling and being honest when saying "no" to our children.

The following two strategies of "choosing relationship over control," and "putting the relationship first," are meant to serve as guidance as we set limits.

Choose relationship over control.

Choosing relationship over control (Barrera and Kramer, 2009, p.51) is all about seeing ourselves as being in a relationship with our children first and foremost and not seeing ourselves as mere controllers. We should be as affected by our children as they are by us, because we are in a relationship. We are anything but static controllers. We are dynamic beings relating to our children, meeting their needs and limiting them to keep them safe. Our relationships with our kids should be genuine, seeing their needs as real and important.

A "relationship," according to Merriam Webster's Online Learner's Dictionary, is defined as two people or things working together or being of the same kind (as cited in Barrera and Kramer, 2009, p.51). This is greatly contrasted by the definition of "control,"

which is “to exercise restraining or directing influence over, to have power over.” We want to see ourselves as working together *with* our kids, not restraining them or overpowering them without minding their needs.

Barrera and Kramer wrote that to establish truly collaborative partnerships, one should choose to have a relationship over control. Because ultimately, this is “a reflection of the growing recognition that reality is composed of relationships between things, not of the things themselves” (2009, p.52). As mentioned before, we are dynamic, our children’s needs change, shouldn’t our limits and controls be dynamic then, too?

Furthermore, each situation, adult and child are different. Flexibility is key, and having a relationship allows for this.

> A disposition toward choosing relationship places an implicit and explicit focus on mutual understanding and acknowledgement of another’s unique perspective as connected with one’s own. In contrast, a disposition toward choosing control instead places an emphasis on non-mutuality and the certainty and predictability of one’s own perspective independent of anyone else’s. (Barrera and Kramer, 2009, p.52.

Once we choose relationship over control, we need to think about the kind of control we want to “exert.” Being relationship-oriented rather than control-oriented sets us and our children free to learn as Kohn eloquently explained:

> In short, with each of the thousand-and-one problems that present themselves in family life, our choice is between controlling and teaching, between creating an

atmosphere of distrust and one of trust, between setting an example of power and helping children to learn responsibility, between quick-fix parenting and the kind that's focused on long-term goals. (2005, p.174)

#13-d: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: State your expectations/ Be playful/ Be authentic/ Choose relationship over control.
Situation: Child was hiding in a corner and did not want to go to the potty. She had been avoiding going to the bathroom for the last ten minutes or so.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: After asking her to go to the potty several times, I looked at her and tilted my head and said, "Should we sing a silly song while we go?" Child: "Yeah!"
Outcome/Notes: We went to the potty. [This instance was part of numbers: 13-a,b,c,d and e.] I used multiple strategies to get her to to the bathroom before the playground. She ran to every corner and we negotiated more time and to go after everyone, but she still she did not want to go. What *worked* in the end? I offered to sing while she went. She is a child who craves warmth and relationships. I had a very good relationship with her. She was very loving and she wanted love in return and did not want to be controlled. She was bright too, and understood the ways of the classroom. I learned that she liked spending time with me and getting attention more than explanations and more than changing her place in line for the potty. Which is

understandable, and just what I did here! Also, importantly, I stopped using a "teacher voice" in this interaction. I was worn out from negotiating with her and just asked her honestly if she wanted to sing together. She picked up on that genuineness and reacted positively to it.

Put the relationship first.

The kind of relationship we have with our children and students is so important. Is it worth it for us to jeopardize our relationship with our children or students just to make sure they listen or do what we want them to do?

As a parent expressed to Kohn, "Being right isn't necessarily what matters" (2005, p. 123). Kohn explained that it does not matter if your child is scared of you. What matters, is if your relationship is solid and loving, that is "an end in itself" (2005, p.123). We should make sure the controlling interventions are worth it before possibly damaging the relationship.

Respectful, non-negotiable limits.

Setting limits is a crucial part of this study. Sometimes our limits need to be enforced regardless of the child's resistance. We are responsible for showing them healthy limits in life and keeping them safe in the classroom at home and anywhere else. Hurting others or oneself is not okay. Moreover, there are often in which we have tried to be open to the child's needs, but what they are doing is not okay. Maybe it disrupts the classroom environment or is not considerate to another child or teacher. In those instances, we set limits as well, with respect.

Kohn gave options for enforcing these limits respectfully for young children (toddlers). They can be used for all ages, though. These provide a middle ground for when *complete* collaboration and flexibility are not possible but respect and genuineness are. I have combined these strategies with others from Faber and Mazlish. Even though some of Faber's and Mazlish's strategies in the following section were not specified as being for toddlers, after analysis and practice, however, I believe that all of the following strategies can be used for children of varying ages (toddlers to elementary-school-aged students).

Therefore, the following strategies help us to go about setting limits in a compassionate, kind manner with regard to our children's feelings and independence. It is up to the teacher or parent to modify the execution of the strategy based on the child's developmental needs. When certain limits are completely necessary, "we should do everything possible to soften the blow and minimize the punitive impact of such a move…furthermore, we should look for ways to help the child reclaim his dignity and a sense of potency" (Kohn, 2005, p.184).

Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) explained this strategy as a way to make children feel understood even as a limit is being set. Show children, with all the empathy skills we have learned thus far, how you care about and accept their emotions. But also explain that certain non-negotiable actions (i.e. kicking, hitting, pushing) are just unacceptable. You can accept the child's feelings by acknowledging and identifying their feelings for them.

Then you can say that what they are doing is not okay. This validation for their feelings will make them much more likely to accept the limit.

#14: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Child didn't want to go to the bathroom. I asked him twice and another teacher asked too. He said that he did not want to go. He wanted to stay on the rug, and refused to go.
Descriptive dialogue: I went to him and said, "I know you really want to stay here. It's time to go to the potty."
Outcome/Notes: I picked him up and took him to the potty—I exerted control. It felt like I was choosing "control" over "relationship." I could have possibly let him go later, but I was not feeling flexible. We asked him three times and it was time for someone to go. Another child had already been saying no, so I needed to put my foot down. I can't be super, super flexible or potty time wouldn't happen! Potty time needs to happen, especially for certain children because they end up having accidents if they don't periodically go. I validated his feelings, though, by acknowledging that he didn't want to go.

Describe the problem.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) wrote that we should explain the issue at hand or what we see that is the issue, without adding judgment. This means that if we see garbage on the floor we should say, "There's a lot of garbage on the floor." Instead of, "What a

horrible mess!" This way the child can assess the situation without our anger or judgment clouding the situation. Describing the problem allows the child to have the opportunity to do something about a problem without any added guilt from our appraisal of the situation.

State your expectations.

This strategy is all about letting children know *clearly* what the limit is or what needs to happen in the situation (Faber and Mazlish, 2003). For example, if a child does not want to clean up his or her toys and you state your expectations, such as, "The toys need to be cleaned up before we go to recess," then that gives him or her the clear knowledge of what must happen.

Knowledge is power and we are providing the child with the tools to be in control of his or her life. By not yelling at them and making them feel guilty, but rather by being clear, we are simply informing them of what has to happen. This makes them feel more powerful over themselves and the situation.

In a case where a child is doing something they should not be, we could say, "Kicking is not okay." Once again, it is clear and concise and gives them the tools to stop on their own.

Say it with a word or a gesture.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) gave this strategy as another way to remind our kids of what they need to do without lecturing them. For example, just say the word "chair" with a friendly tone to remind them where they need to be during a meeting. Sometimes they

forget, and a quick reminder, without making the situation into a big deal, can be very helpful and still allows them to take control over their own bodies.

Be playful.

Faber and Mazlish (2003) encouraged us to relax sometimes when we are enforcing limits for our children. We can use a silly voice to lighten the mood and still set safe limits.

Don't be in a hurry.

"Don't be in a hurry" (Kohn, 2005) is a strategy that is so necessary for busy parents and teachers. It might seem extremely challenging because of the nature of your busy schedules, but if you try setting limits when you are rushed, you are bound for a disaster! You will not have patience to be nice and to take consideration of your children's needs, which will only exacerbate the child and make them want to resist. If you really want to enforce a limit with a tantruming, resisting child, do not rush him/her! The last thing s/he will want to do is hurry up when doing something s/he does not want to do in the first place! Give him/her the time and patience s/he needs.

Try to plan extra time for moments when your children or students might resist doing something (i.e. putting shoes on before school, putting on a hat, coat and gloves before recess, or applying sunscreen). They will need time to have a tantrum or show their frustration in some way and if you do not leave extra time, there is a high chance they will make you run late, which will probably frustrate you, potentially leading you to

resort to using empty threats or, worse, trying to force them physically, which is exhausting and unpleasant for you nor the child.

Therefore, be smart and adjust your schedule so you have extra time to give for the upset and/or defiant child. “If you back off and give kids some time they usually come around” (Kohn, 2005, p.138). The extra time will help the child and you.

#13-e: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Don’t be in a hurry/Turn it into a game.
Situation: Once on the potty, she wanted me to sing with her.
Descriptive dialogue: I was about to leave (the bathroom) to do something but she wanted to sing a silly song, like I had said I would. So I stayed and we had fun. I gave her positive attention while she was on the potty.
Outcome/Notes: Good, she went to the potty! I didn’t think she would mind if I didn’t stay to sing with her, but when she asked me to, I abandoned some administrative work for a few minutes. I followed through on my word and we spent genuine time together singing. This was a learning moment because the child just wanted to sing and have some special time with me. I didn’t think I’d need to follow through on this because I thought she’d be distracted by other things and there was a lot I had to do in the classroom. But when I saw that she really wanted to, I dropped my other tasks to follow

through on my word. As tempting as it was to do my other tasks, I realized quickly that this obviously was something meaningful for her and I wanted her to know that I cared about her feelings. What could be more important? Also, we both had fun!

Use the least intrusive strategy.

When we need to enforce limits and the child resists, we should try to be subtle without overtly taking away all their control. As Kohn (2005) reminded us, "[b]e gentle and kind as possible. Don't overwhelm a child with your power" (p.181).

This also means not making a huge scene to enforce a rule. Kohn (2005) advised us not to get pulled into a power struggle—yelling at each other does not help. Having a discussion does not make sense when the child is unable to be reasoned with. If a child is not ready or willing to discuss a rule, then enforce it firmly but undramatically.

Furthermore, if your child(ren) are angry and emotional, do not try to reason with them! It is not the correct time, because they will not hear you. Leave the rule as is and do not give it any more attention. Kohn (2005) suggested that we back off a bit and give our children space, in turn, giving them autonomy and dignity.

#29: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Use the least intrusive strategy/ Respect.
Situation: Child was about to hit another child. I intervened respectfully and explained that he

needed to hold back from hitting and use his words instead.
Descriptive dialogue: Child 1 was about to hit Child 2. Me: I grabbed Child 1's hand and said with calm, emphasized expression, "Hold your body...hold your body," to match the emotion he was feeling since he wanted her to move. I said, "Use your words and say 'Excuse me, Please move.'" Child 1: "Excuse me, Please move."
Outcome/Notes: He didn't hit her and she moved. I was respectful and helped him regulate and use his words without making a bigger deal than it needed to be. I didn't yell or make a big scene. I calmly, quietly went over to the children and I held back Child 1's hand instead of taking him out of the rug area unnecessarily.

Be honest with them; Be authentic.[3]

Honesty and genuineness makes or breaks our relationship with our children. "If what you're asking your child to do isn't much fun, acknowledge that fact. If you want him to be quiet just because you've had enough ruckus for one day, say so" (Kohn, 2005,

[3] Technically, "be authentic" (Kohn, 2005, p.125) is not one of Kohn's strategies for enforcing compliance with young children, but I combined it with "be honest with them" (Kohn, 2005, p.182), because of its similar definition.

p.182). It is a relationship, remember? Sometimes we do not want our children to do XY&Z just because we honestly do not like what they are doing. We are human and that is natural. It is okay to dislike what your child or student is doing from a personal, selfish point of view. It is how you go about it that matters. Maybe they are playing with an instrument that is just too loud and irritating for your ears, so tell them it hurts your ears! Maybe they are painting all over the place and it is just too messy for today, so, say it!

Kohn (2005) continued, "Don't invent more-impressive-sounding justifications for your request or pretend that something you're telling him to do will be enjoyable when that's unlikely to be true" (p.182). Just be honest!

Tone matters. Let them know your needs in a genuine way, and politely of course. Screaming at them will feel like an attack and will not get the message across. Moreover, they can sense if we are being authentic by the way we speak, with what sort of tone and whether it is just a detached "teacher voice" or not. Even if we have good reason for saying no or for demanding that they do something, the tone we use shows our own genuineness, and it will incline our children significantly more to comply if we communicate genuinely. Children can distinguish our authenticity through our tones, words, facial expressions and body language. Be real with them; it will go a long way.

#50: Small Group Learning Setting Anecdote
Strategy Used: Be honest with them.
Situation: The children were interrupting a lot while I was reading them a story. I admitted

honestly to them that it was just too hard to read when they interrupted so much.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: After they've interrupted my reading several times I said, "I can't," firmly, with frustration. Children: "Can't what?" Me: "I'm only up to here (I pointed to the beginning of the story on the page)." Children: "But I have things to say." Me: "Okay, but sometimes you have to hold it in or raise a quiet hand."
Outcome/Notes: The next child that wanted to speak raised his hand and I answered his question. It was challenging because I tried to be extremely flexible and was very patient with the children, but sometimes, as I wrote here, "I can't." Sometimes it takes honesty and communication to work something out. Of course I wanted them to feel comfortable to speak up, but I wanted them to do so in a way that was conducive for what we were trying to do. *That* was what I was trying to communicate and what I believe they understood.

Describe what you feel.

You can share your feelings with your child or student; it gives them the ability to see your perspective (Faber and Mazlish, 2003). You can explain that you do not like seeing the mess on the floor or that the way they are asking you for something is not nice

and does not make you feel good. Sharing your emotions is genuine and honest and as long as you are not saying it in a mean way, they will want to try to help you feel better.

#44: Small Group Learning Setting Anecdote
Strategy Used: Describe what you feel/State expectations/Express your feelings and needs.
Situation: Two children were complaining about a project I set up for them to do.
Descriptive dialogue: Children: "This is a bad project." Me: "You know, those words hurt my feelings. I only want to do lessons that you guys like, but I put work into it and if you want to say something to make them better, you can share that, but please change how you say it."
Outcome/Notes: They stopped complaining after that. I felt hurt because I spent time coming up with the project idea. It was not only an emotional moment for me but also a teachable moment. It was important for me, as a person, to share my feelings, but the way I did it made it into a learning moment for them. I explained to them why I was upset and gave them tools to continue to speak their minds, but more appropriately and with care for my feelings in the process.

Explain the rationale.

Children like autonomy. When we give them the tools for understanding the logic behind limits, they receive more control. This is especially beneficial when they do not

like the limits. If they hear the logic and accept it, they gain ownership, almost as if they came up with it themselves.

> Offering explanations doesn't guarantee that a child will cheerfully accept our demands—just as it wouldn't always work if someone were telling us we had to do this, or couldn't do that—but it makes acceptance a lot more likely. (Kohn, 2005, p.183)

Children sometimes disobey or act out impulsively, without being entirely sure why they are acting that way. The rationale helps ground them; it gives reasoning that they can relate to much more than being forced to do something they do not understand or care for.

#36: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale/ Describe the problem.
Situation: Child tried hitting another child's head with a hard plastic pipe structure, so I explained with words and showed with gestures why this wasn't safe.
Descriptive dialogue: I used phrases like, "that hurts him," and modeled how hitting someone's head with the pipes could really hurt. I used strong facial expressions to convey with emotion as well as clear and short sentences. Then I demonstrated how we can build on the floor with the pipes but not hit with them.
Outcome/Notes: The child was taught about the impact of his actions instead of being

attacked for them. I explained and modeled the rationale, giving him the tools to understand why he shouldn't hit with the pipes, even if he wanted to. This gave him autonomy because I gave him tools to understand why he shouldn't hit instead of yelling at and telling him to stop without an explanation.

Turn it into a game.

This strategy (Kohn, 2005) really depends on the child and his or her comprehension and maturity level. Some children may not appreciate this and would rather just know the "why" of the limit. Others do not care about the "why" because they just do not feel like doing it. But for some, making it into a game can turn it into something more enticing. The game can also make the limit more concrete and understandable; as an example, a teacher can instruct his or her students to "pick up all the blocks before the timer runs out!" Which is exciting and tangible.

We can invent a game or ask for the child's input (Kohn, 2005). By letting him or her be the one to think of a fun way to do the task, we incorporate respect for the child's wants and needs.

Set an example.

"Apart from simple fairness, it's easier to get kids to do something that we ourselves are willing to do" (Kohn, 2005, p.183). Kohn made a great point here. When we model for our kids the right way to do something, this will help them be more interested in doing it especially if they respect and look up to us.

Keep in mind, this could mean setting the example with narration like, “I’m sitting down now with the group and we’re going to read.” Or if you just do the action without words but you show visible purpose and intent (i.e. exaggerated facial expression and body movement).

Give them as much choice as possible.

This strategy is integral to showing our children that we validate their independence, especially when they have no say in a situation. If we try to give them as much choice as possible it develops their autonomy regardless of the constricting situation.

> Within the constraints of what they have to do, ask them how they want to do it, or where, or when, or with whom. Once you start to think creatively about these issues—and, again, have your kids join you in doing so—it’s amazing how much opportunity there is for decision making even when the bottom line is that something must be done. (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick and Leone, as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.184)

This opportunity for creativity in the limited situation will give children a feeling of strength even when they have to do something they do not want to do.

Kohn (2005) urged parents to provide children with a choice in all kinds of situations including when the outcome *really matters*. “Kids should be able to make some choices that have the potential to make us gulp a bit” (p.179). Actually letting go and

allowing our students and children to make choices that will affect scenarios, shows how committed we are to helping them be autonomous.

Moreover, Reeve, Johnmarshall, Nix and Hamm found that real autonomy comes from construction more than from selection (as cited in Kohn, 2005, p.180). If we want children to *actually* learn independence we need to *actually* let them make choices that we disagree with or did not anticipate for them as much as we can, barring safety issues. It might feel uncomfortable to do this but doing so develops a "muscle" we need to exercise and strengthen as parents and teachers.

When we give our children opportunities and accountability—they learn. "The way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions" (Kohn, 2005, p.169). If we are solely concerned about controlling them without hearing their needs, they lose out on learning from making their own choices.

#1: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Give them as much choice as possible.
Situation: Child started screaming at lunch, so we left to scream in another room.
Descriptive dialogue: "You really want to scream right now. It's too loud in the classroom. So do you want to go to the other room to get it out?"
Outcome/Notes: This took flexibility on my part because I don't enjoy hearing her scream but she needed it at that moment. That's why I offered her the option of doing it in the empty room

across the hall, even though I definitely didn't want to hear it anymore! She screamed in there and then gave me a hug. We came back and she no longer screamed.

Offer a choice.[4]

Faber and Mazlish (2003) wrote that providing children with choices helps motivate them to do tasks that they do not want to do. Instead of threatening and ordering our students and children, we should offer them choices about how to carry out undesired tasks.

For example, we might want to stop a child from block-building especially if we already called "Clean up" several times, but instead of walking over and saying, "Clean up!" we can say, "You love building! It's hard to clean up when you still want to build. It's time to clean up. Do you want to clean them up by yourself, or should I help you?" Offering this choice, gives the child some autonomy in a process that they are clearly not interested in. In addition to that, we show empathy and genuine care for the child's wants and needs. The autonomy, and understanding attitude toward their needs will help make them more inclined to clean up the blocks.

[4] "Offer a choice" (Faber and Mazlish, 2003, p.70) is very similar to Kohn's strategy, "Give them as much choice as possible" (2005, p.183) therefore I applied the two interchangeably.

#24: Toddler Classroom Anecdote
Strategy Used: Offer a choice/ Choose relationship over control.
Situation: Potty time. The children showed lots of opposition for going to the potty. I worked on making this smoother and "choosing relationship over control" but still maintaining limits. I made a chart on the door of the bathroom with a picture of a toilet and Velcro spots below it so children could put up their pictures in the order of when they wanted to go. There were no numbers but they understand the concepts of going first, second, third and what it meant to go before or after other children. They were each handed their picture at snack, before potty time. They could "sign up" for their spot in line with their picture, giving them autonomy wherever possible within the potty process.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "Potty time is starting!" (using chart) "Do you want to go now or next? When do you want to go?" Me: "Potty time is something we do before we go the playground. We have to go potty before the playground, but we can choose when."
Outcome/Notes: The children showed less opposition. They were more enthusiastic actually, because they got to choose when. They were aware of going first or last and were excited to go.

Parents and educators enforce respectful limitation to ensure children's safety and reasonable order. Honesty about whether or not rules are completely non-negotiable is necessary so that parents and educators avoid straining relationships with children unnecessarily. Respectful limitation can and should be done by not overwhelming children with power but rather engendering responsibility in them. Parents and teachers explain authentically the rationale of a rule so that children can understand why a rule is being enforced. Moreover, children can choose *how* to keep a rule or *when* to perform a mandatory task to give them ownership over the experience so that he or she can feel empowered through an experience that might otherwise feel punitive.

Data Collection Analysis

The process of intentionally experimenting with and documenting the compassionate discipline strategies in my practice as a teacher was an enlightening experience.[5] Many strategies were applied, and often simultaneously, for effectiveness and because many overlap or are embedded in one another. The implementation of the strategies caused the students in both age groups to react diversely. The "outcomes" in each scenario depended on the situation and the factors involved, as well as my current temperament and the child(ren)'s involved. I had several significant breakthroughs throughout the study. My practice and perspective as a teacher evolved tremendously.

Toddler classroom.

The strategies were implemented in many types of situations in the toddler classroom, including in the bathroom ("potty"), meeting (whole group gathering), snack, activity-time, and at the playground among other places.

Ultimately, utilizing compassionate discipline enabled me to be me very in tune with the children's needs. I developed my ability to set aside my own needs when appropriate, in order to hear and respect their needs.

There were so many relationships that benefitted tremendously because I used compassionate discipline. When I implemented compassionate discipline with specific children, who for various reasons pushed the envelope (they did not want to sit for

[5] All 54 of the compassionate discipline research anecdotes can be found in the Appendix.

meeting, screamed for no apparent reason at lunch, never wanted to go to the bathroom, were violent with other children) our relationships strengthened. I helped them learn autonomy and to *understand* the damages of hurting others. Imagine if I had used those moments to assert my control and send them to time-out?

Those very same children would not be as independent, responsible and well-adjusted as they are now. We learned together. I supported them in developing themselves emotionally by being accepting of their needs. I helped them to navigate the world of the classroom, to learn the important limits that come with the classroom and the world, while giving them what they needed, emotionally.

For example, when a child was hitting another child with plastic pipes (anecdote #36), I addressed him kindly and firmly and showed him how that could hurt another child. Instead of making him leave the table, I gave him concrete reasons and showed him why what he was doing was not safe. I still had to monitor him, but I demonstrated my trust by letting him continue to play there. I showed him with love and limits that I believed he could learn to be responsible with the toys. Several months later, he acts much safer with them. He sometimes hits the floor with them and breaks them, but he has not hit other children with them in months. I believe his behavioral change stems from the fact that I taught him without embarrassing him and prepared him with tools that he could use on his own.

Furthermore, that trust and respect was conveyed in anecdote #3, when I chose not to be rigid. The child wanted to touch his genitalia, while I changed his diaper. I first

said “No!” because his hands would get dirty. However, I then realized that just because it might really bother me, it actually *was* appropriate because after all, we were in the bathroom, which is where those kinds of things are okay. I changed my perspective and told him that he could continue. He was so happy. I showed him that his needs were important to me. This validation and respect for his needs strengthened the relationship in a way that empowered all of our other disciplinary encounters because we had a trustworthy, respectful relationship with each other.

When a parent or teacher controls children, they become more dependent on the controller. Lovingly, educationally and safely limiting children teaches them independence.

A different child hated going to the bathroom (anecdote #14). He preferred to act on his own terms and did not want to go when I wanted him to. As such, he often had accidents. He really needed to go when I encouraged him to go, and although he hated going, it was necessary. He did have a choice, though, when it came to choosing the *exact* moment to go, due to the potty chart (anecdote #24), which was created largely because of him. This method gave him a concrete way to choose when to go. He chose to go last every time. This activity was something he wanted to be able to choose and the chart gave him the control to do so. It helped our relationship so much.

Before the chart, there were many times when I had to fight with him and pick him up to get him to go to the bathroom. If I didn’t force him to go, experience proved that he would have accidents. The potty chart, meant to provide him with as much choice

as possible in the process of going to the potty, really helped our relationship. We began to joke around when we got to the bathroom instead of being serious and tired from my forcing him to go. The system helped us focus on the positive moments, instead.

Another child resisted using the bathroom and many other things. compassionate discipline impacted our relationship tremendously. In anecdotes 13 (a, b, c, d and e), when I tried many different strategies to get her to go to the bathroom, she refused and ran away every time I attempted to send her. She finally listened when I stopped using a "teacher voice" and just looked her in the eyes, tilted my head and offered to sing with her while she went to the potty. The strategy of "be authentic" sufficed. Some might consider this instance to be a moment of spoiling a child, but I call it being *real* with her. She was not interested before, when she was forced, because she wanted me to be genuine. She wanted control and attention. I worked on having the patience to give her more flexibility. I gave her autonomy and explanations, which she really liked, and the strategies made her a leader in the classroom. However, she sought love and attention, therefore I acted authentically with her. I had fun with her and we turned limitation situations into games.

Through using the compassionate discipline techniques, I noticed that she reacted best to special time we spent together one-on-one. We read together, played together and sang together. This helped outweigh the difficult moments when she did not want to listen to me. I worked on using those moments to provide her with more responsibility for herself and to show her my trust in her. This was the case in anecdote #19, when she refused to line up after recess, and I offered her a hug. She excitedly accepted my offer

and then ran to the line. The more fun and genuineness that we had, the more she listened and wanted to take on responsibility. We became so close through this process, that most mornings when she entered the classroom she first ran to me to hug me or show me something special to her. We developed a trust with each other that was unbreakable. Authentic interactions contributed to that foundation.

Perhaps the most defining breakthroughs of the study were those that focused on accepting children's feelings while stopping unacceptable behaviors. Emotional outbursts occurred frequently throughout the study, and the anecdotes captured the compassionate discipline strategies that helped children to navigate their emotions and express themselves appropriately. In particular, anecdotes 32 and 17 in the toddler classroom showed empathy and self-regulation as I held a child that was upset and acting out. I lovingly accepted his feelings while encouraging him to slow down his body, to regulate, by breathing slowly with me ("blowing out candles"). I either held him on my lap in a warm hug or stood on my knees at eye level with him, my arms wrapped around him. I used my regulated tone and body movements to ground him.

However, I never *once* rejected his feelings. I validated him completely. I acknowledged his feelings with sounds and facial expressions. I didn't force the child to *stop* feeling, I welcomed his feelings and encouraged him to *feel* by empathizing and acknowledging his emotional experiences. After that, we were able to address how to express ourselves appropriately. I guided him to "use his words" without hitting other children or screaming and crying but only after empathizing with him first.

Similarly, in the small group learning setting with six and seven-year-olds (anecdotes 49 and 53), I accepted the children's feelings when they expressed anxiety or anger. Instead of hugging them though, I gave them space to release their tension. I acknowledged their frustrations and assured them I'd help them with whatever they would need.

Interestingly, because of this study, the strategy of "accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior" was implemented more frequently by my co-teachers in the toddler classroom. Over time, the environment was impacted so much that the classroom became an emotionally safer place than it had been before. Children felt safe and teachers did too. There was an unspoken understanding that children needed to be validated for their emotions even if an "unacceptable behavior" was being stopped. Sensitivity cloaked the classroom and affected the camaraderie of the teaching team as well as the "feeling" of the classroom community in general.

Implementing this philosophy also brought some significant challenges. Some children with different needs benefited from compassionate discipline, but also needed accompanying strategies for their bodily needs and impulses. More often than not, compassionate discipline was beneficial, yet at times I also needed to utilize other techniques that provided sensory stimulation, or regulation for a child's over-stimulated body. In anecdote #33, I provided a child with a structured, regulating activity of peeling tape off of the floor. It was a hectic, transitional time and that was an activity that suited him best because of its focused nature. At first it seemed wrong to provide such a rote, trivial activity. But when I opened my mind to the possibility that peeling tape could help

children that feel so dis-regulated during transitions, I realized that this, in essence was compassionate discipline— the strategy of "listen to the child's feelings and *needs*."

Compassionate discipline is a framework of love, attention and reasoning, but if a child's self-control is limited, s/he might not understand the reasoning. If his or her body impulses are too strong, s/he will not care if you explain the rationale or empathize because s/he often acts (i.e. pushes children) before thinking. It is in those moments when limits, along with a kind and compassionate touch, are crucial. Children's safety is never to be compromised.

Nevertheless, using these strategies was still good for children with all kinds of needs because it promoted respect and love. However, the degree to which they were used and how much power was relinquished was key. I had to monitor how much independence each child could handle, because too much would not help, but neither would too little.

Small group learning setting.

Working with the small group of 6 and 7-year-olds, was extremely different than with the toddlers. I mostly utilized empathy and reasoning, along with respect and acceptance, to implement compassionate discipline in the classroom.

Really listening to them and working *with* them was important and difficult (anecdote #49). Sometimes, I might have let them dictate scenarios too much (i.e. rules, choices of projects). However, I was working so diligently to be flexible and to be there

for them. They seemed to never be happy with anything and one child exhibited very challenging emotions. When they often complained, I maintained being open-minded and open to hear their needs. I opened up the curriculum to them and asked them honest questions about what they wanted to do. I knew they liked learning, so I gave them lots of information and handed over a large portion of control to them (anecdotes numbers 45-a & 52). That proved to made their learning exponentially better.

When it came to the child with a lot of emotions, I tried to be extremely empathetic. Older children with lots of emotions, like toddlers, need empathy and attention. I often incorporated the strategy of problem solving together with them. This strategy made them feel validated and strong.

I was very honest with them and that made our communication clear and productive. We, together, as a group, learned from those conversations because they collaborative, open and genuine (anecdotes numbers 48, & 50). I also shared my feelings with the children when I felt disrespected (anecdote #44). It was important for me to share my feelings when they said hurtful things so that they could learn the cause and effect of their words. The experiment was extremely productive with them because it forced me to be very flexible (anecdotes numbers 46 & 47) which they recognized. They felt that sense of commitment from me and in turn, took more responsibility for their learning. Their learning was more successful and left them feeling positively towards the subject matter.

Conclusion

To end this study, I ask the same question that I asked at the beginning of this process: “What are our long-term goals for our children?” The answer: We want our children to be smart, independent, kind, giving and active citizens of the world.

After completing this study, I can confidently say that compassionate discipline provided me with the tools to prepare my students to be strong children. The techniques I utilized to implement compassionate discipline were by no means quick fixes.

The children were not forced to do what I wanted, rather they were given opportunities to think for themselves and to construct their own lives. It took a lot of patience on my part and time on theirs for them to understand how to accept responsibility for themselves and to be conscious of others. Through experiences, they were able to cultivate these skills in which they developed a sense of autonomy and self-awareness.

I gave them my trust, as well as my love and attention. The genuineness between us created a level of comfort that enabled them to grow more with me. They felt safe and happy with me because we were authentic with each other. I was honest with the children as well, which strengthened the relationship’s authenticity. The children learned to take accountability for their actions, as well as to be community-oriented and conscientious of their peers’ and teachers’ needs.

After all of my experiences, I can affirm that compassionate discipline works. Accepting, loving and collaborating with children works. Trying to control them does not. I did not do a formal data collection for trying to control children and forcing them to do things without any choices or empathy and compassion, but I did find that whenever I resorted to this, due to loss of patience, it just was not as effective. Children were more rebellious. Those instances truly strained our relationship.

On the other hand, the more I tried to be very patient with them—even when they were being very difficult—to give them more autonomy, to explain the rationales and to be honest with them, the better our relationship was. The children noticed my patience and the commitment. They felt the independence that I enabled them to have. They reacted well to having responsibility and trust. The more responsibility and trust they received, the more they stepped up.

They also showed increased awareness of my needs as I showed more concern for theirs. Kohn (2005) wrote that children will learn what you show them: if you respect them, they will respect you too. I worked painstakingly on my mindset to heed Kohn's advice. For example, I tried to find reasons for why children might be acting the way they were so that I could still respect and appreciate them even when they were making the class routine difficult.

I worked very hard to outnumber the exasperating interactions with harmonious ones, so that our relationship could always have more positive aspects than negative ones. If I felt that a relationship was more negative than positive, I either took a break from that

child, asked another teacher to address him or her or challenged myself to go above and beyond to change the nature of that relationship. The more I respected the children, the more I felt that they respected me back.

I once heard Mr. Charlie Harary, Esq., lecture about how to have successful interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Harary said that if you want to have a positive relationship with a co-worker, do not even *think* negative thoughts about him or her. Harary said that those negative thoughts will come through in your actions and in your words. This might feel like an impossible standard, but it is an important one to strive for. Children can pick up on our vibes, so we either work hard to rid our frustrations with them from the inside and to really appreciate their differences, or we run the risk of them picking up on that frustration and making them feel bad, thus undermining our entire relationship with them.

Do not control children. Appreciate them. Open your mind to what they are doing and why. That is what compassionate discipline has proved to be true. Controlling them is not realistic and does not yield any positive long-term effects. Control is a short-term solution with negative long-term effects.

Compassionate discipline builds the relationship between the teacher and child. It cultivates respect for the child in a very active way. In order to take on compassionate discipline, I had to alter my mindset to respect and accept my students. Then, when applying the strategies, the philosophy forced me to ingrain that respect for their needs in

myself even more. I think they felt that acceptance and love, which made our relationship so genuine and strong.

We were so closely bonded by the end of the year because I had been working *with* them and really trying to empathize and listen to their needs. They recognized my efforts and we had a respectful, loving, collaborative relationship. Most importantly, we established a two-way street—they felt that I listened to them and therefore they were more open to respecting and hearing my words and needs.

Some children have needs that stretch beyond the scope of love, discipline and structure. They may need something more, be it physical, cognitive, or another form of support. If other needs are not being met, compassionate discipline may not be enough for them. The philosophy is certainly still very beneficial for developing them as people and for helping them learn to take care of themselves and others. However, sensory needs or psychological needs, for example, need to be addressed and should not be left to be solved by compassionate discipline. It can complement the treatment but it cannot replace it.

In this experiment, I intentionally avoided punishment. I worked tirelessly to avoid it. As the literature shows, punishment is more harmful than helpful. Therefore, instead of using punitive measures, I stuck to the strategies and maximized the use of logic, love and opportunities for autonomy and involvement. This strengthened my relationship with the children and forced me to think creatively about how I could help them learn, instead of taking the easy way out and punishing them. It is more difficult to

think outside the “punishment box,” which might *seem* like the best choice sometimes, but rather, it was patience that enabled me to go farther and to do better by my students.

Reflection

I learned a tremendous amount from my experiments with the toddlers. I worked unwearyingly to not be rigid, which helped me accommodate their needs. All of the children were different and exhibited different needs. This experiment really drove that lesson home for me. It was very interesting to see what each child needed. Some children specifically needed rationale, or extra structure and others just needed love and attention to motivate them to follow the rules.

There were many moments when I incorporated the "don't be rigid" strategy even when I really wanted to just force them to do what I wanted. Yet, I saw through these experiments just how effective it was to *not* be so rigid and to *not* be in such a hurry, but rather to hear their needs and to be flexible. It worked better for me as a teacher in the long run. The children felt respected by me and I truly learned to respect them. Our bonds grew tremendously and made for a better classroom dynamic. They became more independent and I became a better teacher and more attuned to their needs.

Despite their differences, there were certain strategies that I incorporated with every child, such as empathy, respect and acceptance. After implementing all the strategies, I reflect on Kohn's phrase "unconditional love." Love. Commitment to children. This is what lies beneath the surface of Respect. This is where empathy, acceptance and respect overlap and intertwine. On a practical level, it takes a commitment to the children that must to be so dense, it should be labeled as nothing other than "love." It was not a strategy listed, or experimented in the data collection but as I

reflect on the experience I realize that it was present in many of the anecdotes. Teachers must have a level of commitment to their children that is unwavering.

Otherwise, there are so many potential "disappointments" as a teacher. Children often do not listen or do what you want! However, if you work on yourself to love your children and students and be committed to them, no matter what, then it will be good for you. When you build a close relationship through small and big shared moments, mundane and exciting, boring and dramatic and love them no matter what, the love makes it possible to tolerate them even when they misbehave a lot.

It is a challenge, because with some children, this bond will be natural and with others it will not be and it will need to be cultivated.

Kohn struck a chord in me from the get-go with "unconditional love." After trying out his suggestions, I am confident he is right. Parents and/or teachers must demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance even when children are not compliant. Teaching, parenting and living, in general, are so much harder when we try to be perfect and when we want our kids to be perfect. It is better to look at life as a growth process and leave room to be human— that is, imperfect.

Inviting children to brainstorm with us is a process that highlights this idea. It welcomes the unknown—the imperfect—when we allow children to have a say in matters. However, it enriches the conversation, and the solutions become more effective. Collaboration brings the process of life down-to-earth.

It is an imperative for me to try to respect and accept my students unconditionally. To love them, see the good in them, respect them and collaborate with them. Ultimately, it is for the good of the classroom, them and for me. Teaching will be a long disappointing road if I do not implement compassionate discipline.

People have commented to me before that I am good at "not getting stressed in chaotic situations." I was once told this when I was a student teacher. The school's psychologist noticed that the classroom was super chaotic but said that I looked so calm. I said, "Oh, trust me, I'm feeling all the dis-regulation, just on the inside!"

People have told me that I am very tolerant and patient with children who are really difficult. I laugh when I hear this, because it certainly does not come easily to me! I worked very hard and continue to, as noted in the anecdotes I recorded (and many, many others not recorded), to answer emotionally dis-regulated, tantruming, screaming, disobedient children calmly, patiently and appropriately. It's difficult! It's really hard when children are emotional and want what I do not want.

I worked so hard to have patience for them in those tough times and to tolerate and love them even when it felt almost impossible to handle a child in such a challenging moment. Learning to have that patience made me a stronger teacher and person. It made the children feel safe to be emotional because I was there to be a boundary, a haven. They knew that even when they were emotional I would be there for them. I believe it was this resilience that made it possible for many children to regulate their bodies because they

felt the regulation that I was striving for, in addition to the guidance I provided them in their regulation.

Unconditional love makes it possible to collaborate with the children and to tolerate the really challenging instances. There were times where the kids really hurt my feelings, and I had to muster up all my energy to answer respectfully and to make the experience a teachable moment instead of responding angrily.

Another motivation for me to continue utilizing compassionate discipline was the fact that they could *learn* from the way we interacted in these extremely challenging moments. They could learn important social-emotional and interpersonal skills *and* learn how to regulate themselves by seeing how I responded.

If there is one strategy that consistently arose, weaving itself in between all the strategies, it was empathy. Whether or not they were labeled as such, most of the anecdotes involved empathy. Empathy to me meant to accept the children's feelings, to *be with* them and to identify and acknowledge their emotions in any way I could.

This study revolved around respecting children, accepting them, and working with them from where they are in their individual development—not from some other point at which I assume they ought to be.

I am absolutely sure that I will gain more insights as time goes on, well after this study is done, because *real* learning takes time and practice. This entire study has been a year-long process, where the theory has evolved and changed in my mind and in my

practice. Compassionate discipline became natural to me, and if something about the style felt uncomfortable to me I rethought how I wanted to apply it and molded it to myself. Balance was key. I realized that trying to be a perfect teacher was not plausible. I tried to ingrain these compassionate concepts in myself and to mold the strategies to fit my interactions with the children and vice versa. I *pushed* myself but, also made sure to find my comfort zone within compassionate discipline.

Teachers everywhere need to find their place along the spectrum of opinions and styles and develop their own—as I have now.

Questions for the Future

I have many questions unanswered and I am looking forward to continue learning in my career as I search for answers.

Emotions: Rabbi Gul wrote about the importance of not being angry at our children when correcting them, otherwise they will have anger towards themselves in adulthood. But what are we supposed to do if a child's act genuinely frustrates or angers us? It is nearly impossible to eradicate that anger. Should we just never correct them if anger is present? Gul said that if it is even below the surface, children will be able to pick up on the vibes.

Limits: What about when children are really unsafe? Is expulsion a solution or will that breach unconditionally loving students? As I stated, safety is never to be compromised, so how do we make that call?

References

Asadah Sense Consulting. (2010). *Parental code of ethics*. Beating Black Kids, Retrieved from http://www.beatingblackkids.com/

Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development, 37*(4), 887-907.

Baumrind, Diana. (2008). In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Retrieved from http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045300164.html

Bernstein, D.A. (2013). *Parenting and teaching: What's the connection in our classrooms?* Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/ptn/2013/09/parenting-teaching.aspx

Block, N. (2011). *Ohio timeline*. National Child Protection Training Center, Winona, MN. Retrieved from http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/center-for-effective-discipline/discipline-and-the-law/ohio-timeline

Danley, E. (2016). *Is it legal to spank your kids?* Parent Map, Mercer Island, WA. Retrieved from https://www.parentmap.com/article/legal-united-states-spanking-kids

Dictionary. (2016). In *Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scold

Discipline at Home. (2016). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/center-for-effective-discipline/discipline-at-home

Discipline and the Law. (2016). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/center-for-effective-discipline/discipline-and-the-law

Discipline at School. (2016). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/center-for-effective-discipline/discipline-at-school

Drexler, P. (April, 29, 2013). *Don't shame children in pursuit of discipline*. Retrieved from https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/our-gender-ourselves/201304/dont-shame-children-in-pursuit-discipline

Entin, E. (October, 15, 2013). *The damage yelling can do*. Retrieved from http://www.thedoctorwillseeyounow.com/content/kids/art4166.html

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (2003). *How to talk so kids can learn: What every parent and teacher needs to know at home and in school*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Gallagher, K. C. (2005). Brain research and early childhood development: A primer for developmentally appropriate practice. *YC Young Children,60*(4), 12.

Gershoff, E., Larzelere, R. (2002). *Is corporal punishment an effective means of discipline?* American Psychological Association, Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2002/06/spanking.aspx

Gershoff, E. T. (2013), Spanking and child development: We know enough now to stop hitting our children. *Child Development Perspectives, 7,* 133–137. doi: 10.1111/cdep.12038

Ginott, H. G. (1972). *Teacher and child; a book for parents and teachers*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Kohn, A. (2006). *Unconditional parenting: Moving from rewards and punishments to love and reason*. New York, NY: Atria Books

Landreth, G. (2012). *Play therapy: The art of the relationship*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Navarrette, R. (2014). *Spanking isn't child abuse; It's common sense.* Cable News Network, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/18/opinion/navarrette-spanking-kids/

Researchers: African-Americans Most Likely to use Physical Punishment. (2011). Retrieved July, 13, 2016, from http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/10/researchers-african-americans-most-likely-to-use-physical-punishment/

Scolding Kids Harms as Much as Hitting, Study Says. (2002). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/760778/posts

Sears, W.& Sears, M. (1st Ed.). (1995). *The discipline book: Everything you need to know to have a better-behaved child—from birth to age ten*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.

State Laws. (2016). Retrieved July 14, 2016, from http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/center-for-effective-discipline/discipline-and-the-law/state-laws

Appendix

Compassionate Discipline Anecdotal Research

The data was collected simultaneously between the two age groups but are listed separately to emphasize the contrast.

NOTE: All names, dates and any significant details have been removed to completely mask the identities of the research participants. Instead of "**Date**" in the top line of the template it now lists a number to identify the anecdote.

Toddler Classroom: two and three-year-olds. Anecdotes numbers: 1-43.

#1
Strategy Used: Give them as much choice as possible.
Situation: Child started screaming at lunch, so we left to scream in another room.
Descriptive dialogue: "You really want to scream right now. It's too loud in the classroom. So do you want to go to the other room to get it out?"
Outcome/Notes: This took flexibility on my part because I don't enjoy hearing her scream but she needed it at that moment. That's why I offered her the option of doing it in the empty room across the hall, even though I definitely didn't want to hear it anymore! She screamed in there and then gave me a hug. We came back and she no longer screamed.

#2
Strategy Used: State your expectations/ Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Child 1 hurt a few children (age 4) and I went over to help. They were all standing on a ledge on our playground watching fire-trucks and a fire.
Descriptive dialogue: Child 2: "She hit me" Child 3: "She pushed me" Me to Child 1: "You pushed them—they don't like that." Child 1 cried and I empathized with her, while saying that "they didn't like that. We don't push." But then after a moment I decided to just hug her.
Outcome/Notes: She felt my acceptance and love but understood the limit I gave.

#3
Strategy Used: Don't be rigid!/ There's always a third choice.
Situation: Child wanted to touch his genitalia while I changed his diaper, I said, "No!" because although there was nothing dirty in that area, it wasn't exactly clean to touch. He became upset and sad. I changed my mind and said he could do it, and he was happy.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: “No! You can’t touch your penis!” I scratched his stomach accidentally because I grabbed his hand away from touching himself. He looked like he was going to cry so I said, very genuinely, “I’m so sorry. I really scared you.” Then I hugged him and continued, “But you can’t touch your penis because it makes your hands dirty.”

Child: On the verge of tears, “But I want to touch it.”

Me: I paused and thought for a moment. Then I said, “Okay, you can touch your penis.”

Child: Smiled and was happy. He touched his penis for a few seconds.

Me: “Okay! Say, ‘I’ll see you later!’”

Child: he put it down and said, “I’m fixing it.”

Me: I finished putting on his diaper, and then helped him wash his hands and return to class.

Outcome/Notes: The child left feeling validated, happy and allowed to do something that he wanted to do because, after all, it *is* the bathroom, the place appropriate for this. This was a proud moment for me because I chose not to be rigid in what I thought was okay.

I am aware that to some people it might seem like I have gone too far. But I have not. Every human is entitled to his or her own body. Adults take care of their body’s needs in the bathroom and children are entitled to take care of themselves as well. I chose not to be rigid here, all the more so, because we were *in the bathroom*, the place where having privacy for one’s own body is allowed. It seemed at first like there weren’t many choices in the situation but after I thought for a moment, I realized that there was another solution if I opened my mind up to it.

#4
Strategy Used: Give them as much choice as possible.
Situation: Child did not want to sit on her dot (spot on rug); she wanted to sit on the blue dot, which was closed. I gave her a choice to either go to her dot immediately or wait a moment and then I'd sing her name (part of meeting routine).
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "You need to sit on your dot, the blue (dot) is closed." Child: "Nooooo (groan)" Me: "You reaallllllyyyy want to sit in the blue but you need to sit on your dot. I'm gonna continue singing and I know you can get your body to a dot; then I can sing your name.
Outcome/Notes: She moved to her dot a moment after we stopped speaking about it and when I got to her name in meeting song, I gave her a thumbs up and a smile as I sang it.

#5
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior/Explain the rationale/Identify the child's feelings/Acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word.
Situation: Child was adamantly saying no to the potty.

Descriptive dialogue: Me: “You’re so angry! Grrrr. You’re frustrated. You don’t want to go potty, but (child’s name) sometimes our pee needs to come and we don’t even realize it (point to my head)! So we need to try and go potty and see if it comes. Even though we don’t need to, we try! We go pee so then you can play, play, play. First you go pee—you just try and see, and then you can play, play, play.”
Outcome/Notes: Eventually the child went to potty. The strategies gave the child understanding of why we need to go the potty while also concretizing her feelings and validating her.

#6
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale, Be authentic.
Situation: Child was screaming at the playground for fun, so I redirected her to continue screaming elsewhere.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “(child’s name), scream over there. You can scream on the playground but it’s too loud for my ears right here (I gestured to show my vicinity); but you can scream there (pointed to another area).”
Outcome/Notes: She went there, with no hard feelings. By being authentic and explaining to

where she should go and why, the child gained more control over herself in the moment than if I had moved her or told her to leave without explaining why.

#7
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior/Respect/Acknowledge the child's feelings with a sound or a word.
Situation: Child was trying to get on the trampoline, while pushing others to get on.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "You really, really want to go on, but you need to wait." Child: "First they are going—wait in line after them."
Outcome/Notes: Child was very upset but got off trampoline. I accepted his emotions by verbally acknowledging them but still enforced the rule that he had to wait in line. I did all of this with respect.

#8
Strategy Used: Reconsider your requests.
Situation: Trampoline. Each child jumps for a short time because there is a long line. I finished counting down for a certain child, but he seemed to want more time, so I adjusted

timing for him. I gave him another 5 seconds.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: Counting down 10 seconds for child "10, 9, 8...1, you're done!" Child: "Not yet" Me: "Okay fine! 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, you're done!"
Outcome/Notes: He got off the trampoline nicely. It's hard to get off of the trampoline after only ten seconds! It's understandable that a child would want extra time and since he wouldn't hold up the line too much, I gave him another five seconds. This showed the child that I really cared about his needs and gave him validation. He did not resist at all when coming off after that.

#9
Strategy Used: Respect.
Situation: A child tried to push others to get onto the trampoline.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "No, thank you," as I gently guided the child to step off the trampoline.
Outcome/Notes: I respectfully reminded him not to push with a subtle movement, without yelling at him or making a big deal. He looked upset but got off.

#10
Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more.
Situation: I lead a "Simon Says" game without words, but rather with gestures. Two kids were doing their own thing and playing on the side.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I asked twice, "Boys please stop playing." Then I used no words and just modeled the movements for them and looked at them.
Outcome/Notes: They played another few moments themselves, then they played along with my game as I asked. I felt that the more I talked at that moment, the bigger deal it would be; therefore, I used silent gestures instead. This cut out the lengthy speech about why they needed to join, made it more subtle, but still firm, and also more interesting, that they wanted to join.

#11
Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more.
Situation: Children were pushing each other in the block area.
Descriptive dialogue: Child 1 and Child 2 were pushing Child 3's body. Child 3 was saying, "Don't push!" and I already told them twice to stop because I heard Child 3's words. I went over there and said

again, “I heard him say don’t push...what’s going on here?”

Child 1 and Child 2 explained that Child 3 was scaring their animals and they were trying to not let him get the animals.

Outcome/Notes: I saw that repeated commands weren’t working. So I just stopped what I was doing and went over to them and asked what was happening. I listened and I found out that I was missing information. It wasn’t clear from afar, even though it seemed to be, and when I talked less, and asked more I found out that Child 3 was bothering Children 1 & 2. I intervened and helped them work it out after that.

#12

Strategy Used: Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts.

Situation: On the playground a teacher brought Child 1 to me. Child 1 was crying and the teacher said, “Child 2 was attacking Child 1.” Now this could have happened, but Child 2 has been improving and not hitting lately, so I didn’t want to assume that he was.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: I held Child 1 (acknowledged her sad feelings) and asked her what happened. Then we went over to Child 2 together and I asked, “What happened? She’s crying. Did you push her?” I asked him questions about what happened and once he said he pushed her I said, “Not safe. She’s crying; she doesn’t like that.”

Child 2: heard me and gave one word responses, "Yes," and we maintained eye contact. I wasn't mean, but matter of fact.
Outcome/Notes: I validated Child 1's feelings and the three of us had a successful interaction. I explained to Child 2 that Child 1 was hurt and didn't like being pushed. This strategy is a challenge with children with limited language. I waited to reprimand Child 1 until he said that he pushed Child 2; however, he has limited language. And it's possible that since I asked him, "Did you push her?" that I set him up to say, "Yes." But with a child with more language, I might have been able to ask a more open-ended question instead. It still was better, though, to ask Child 1 if he pushed her instead of walking over and telling him not to push. Even if it was a pointed question I still gave him a platform to say yes or no and to have some involvement in the situation, instead of being told simply not to push.

The following 5 anecdotes: #13-a, b, c, d and e, happened within a 30-minute span of each other and involved the same child.

#13-a
Strategy Used: Reconsider your requests.
Situation: Child didn't want to go potty, so I changed her picture (in the picture order of who was going to the potty, on the chart).
Descriptive dialogue:

Me: “Do you want to go last instead?” Child: “Okay.”
Outcome/Notes: This made her happy and validated her (still didn’t come though).

#13-b
Strategy Used: Don’t be in a hurry.
Situation: I gave her more time until she had to go to the potty.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “Do you want to go after (another child’s name)? Or after (another child’s name)?” Child: “Yea!”
Outcome/Notes: It didn’t help, but she liked this. I thought, “If she really doesn’t want to go, why not be flexible and just send different children first?”

#13-c
Strategy Used: Accept the child’s feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: She really didn’t want to go potty, she ran to a corner and I talked to her there.

Descriptive dialogue: Me: "You reaallly don't want to go potty. It's time though; now we pee—then we go to the playground and play, play, play. So first potty then the playground." Child: "Noooo" in a whining tone.
Outcome/Notes: I acknowledged her feelings and explained why we go to the potty, but it didn't work; she still didn't want to go.

#13-d
Strategy Used: State your expectations/ Be playful/ Be authentic/ Choose relationship over control.
Situation: Child was hiding in a corner and did not want to go to the potty. She had been avoiding going to the bathroom for the last ten minutes or so.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: After asking her to go to the potty several times, I looked at her and tilted my head and said, "Should we sing a silly song while we go?" Child: "Yea!"
Outcome/Notes: We went to the potty. [This instance was part of numbers: 13-a,b,c,d and e.] I used multiple strategies to get her to to the bathroom before the playground. She ran to every corner and we negotiated more time and to go after everyone, but she still she did not want to

go. What *worked* in the end? I offered to sing while she went. She is a child that craves warmth and relationships. I had a very good relationship with her. She was very loving and she wanted love in return and not to be controlled. She was bright too, and understood the ways of the classroom. I learned that she liked spending time with me and getting attention more than explanations and more than changing her place in line for the potty. Which is understandable and just what I did here! Also, a very important point here, was that I stopped using a "teacher voice" in this interaction. I was worn out from negotiating with her and just asked her honestly if she wanted to sing together. She picked up on that genuineness and reacted positively to it.

#13-e

Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry/Turn it into a game.

Situation: Once on the potty, she wanted me to sing with her.

Descriptive dialogue:

I was about to leave (the bathroom) to do something but she wanted to sing a silly song, like I had said I would. So I stayed and we had fun. I gave her positive attention while she was on the potty.

Outcome/Notes: Good, she went to the potty!

I didn't think she would mind if I didn't stay to sing with her, but when she asked me to, I abandoned some administrative work for a few minutes. I followed through on my word and

we spent genuine time together singing. This was a learning moment because the child just wanted to sing and have some special time with me. I didn't think I'd need to follow through on this because I thought she'd be distracted by other things and there was a lot I had to do in the classroom. But when I saw that she really wanted to, I dropped my other tasks to follow through on my word. As tempting as it was to do my other tasks, I realized quickly that this obviously was something meaningful for her and I wanted her to know that I cared about her feelings. What could be more important? Also, we both had fun!

#14
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Child didn't want to go to the bathroom. I asked him twice and another teacher asked too. He said that he did not want to go. He wanted to stay on the rug, and refused to go.
Descriptive dialogue: I went to him and said, "I know you really want to stay here. It's time to go to the potty."
Outcome/Notes: I picked him up and took him to the potty—I exerted control. It felt like I was choosing "control" over "relationship." I could have possibly let him go later, but I was done being flexible. We asked him three times and it was time for someone to go. Another child had already been saying no, so I needed to put my foot down. I can't be super, super flexible or potty time wouldn't happen! Potty time needs to happen, especially for certain

children because they end up having accidents if they don't periodically go. I validated his feelings, though, by acknowledging that he didn't want to go.

#15

Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more.

Situation: Child 1 came to me to tell me that Child 2 pushed him. I went over to Child 2 and asked him if he did. Maybe he had a reason, so I asked genuinely, to find out without assuming anything.

Descriptive dialogue:

Child 1 came over to me and said: "He (Child 2) pushed me."

I went over to Child 2 and asked, "Did you push him?" instead of assuming.

Child 2: "Yes"

Me: "Why?"

Child 2 gave me a reason. He wanted Child 1 to move from the spot he was in.

Then we checked on Child 1's body together.

Outcome/Notes: It was much nicer to not assume that Child 2 pushed him, so instead of going over to him and saying, "We don't push" I asked him first if he did it.

It was a teachable moment and a good use of compassionate discipline. Child 1 was respected by being asked and was taught that pushing can hurt others. In addition, he should check on

their bodies if he does so.

#16
Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry.
Situation: Before cool down after playground, this child was being wild (and acted like this often at other times as well). So instead of sending him into the classroom right away for the whole class cool down, I offered time to cool down in the hall with me. He often disrupted it and couldn't follow because he was too energized. No reason to rush him here.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "Are you ready? Do you need more time to cool down?" I made it clear that there was no hurry. Child said that he was ready.
Outcome/Notes: He had his own cool down process and was aware of what he needed to do.

Check-in with research halfway through. My notes from *during* the process.
● I'm pleasantly surprised. I use a lot of the strategies that I set out to use. I find that I haven't been using the "be honest with them" strategy often. I've been lacking in the authenticity department because it seems that it might invalidate the request in some

ways. Like if I tell them "It hurts my ears" when they yell or something, they may not take that as seriously as "it's not a choice to yell."

- I've reflected a lot on what it means to give choice because Kohn said that giving a choice that isn't really a choice is like asking a question that doesn't really have more than one answer. [It's not a real choice if it's obvious that if they make the wrong choice then it'll be bad news.] Therefore, I've been trying to question, then to state what needs to happen and to be flexible about the next steps. "How do u want to do this? X needs to happen somehow." I'd like to work on this and ask more questions and honestly give choices.
- I'd like to be more intentional about explaining the rationale and being honest.
- Many strategies are embedded in others, like "listen to their feelings and needs" is similar to "reconsider your requests" or "respect".
- I like that I've been doing "talk less, ask more." It's been great.

#17
Strategy Used: Listen to the child's feelings and needs/ Set an example/ Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.
Situation: Music time on the rug, Child 1was crying and lunging at Child 2 because he wanted his seat.

Descriptive dialogue:

Child 1 had hurt his nose a moment before and he wanted Child 2's seat. He was crying and lunging at Child 2 saying, "I wanna sit there!" He was trying to hit him or get him out of that chair with physical force.

Me: I held him back, but he kept trying to get out of my arms, so I picked him up and we walked outside of the circle (on the rug). I got down onto my knees at eye level with him. I held up three fingers for him to blow out because his 3rd birthday was that morning.

I said, "Let's breathe in 3 big breaths and blow out three birthday candles...breathe in, breathe out." I breathed deeply in and out the first two times for him; he was very close to my chest so he felt it and breathed with me for the the third. He calmed down a lot. Then I said, "Okay, you want to sit in that chair, but (Child 2's name) is sitting there. The one next to him is open, though, can you go ask him now if you can sit there?"

Outcome/Notes: He asked so nicely and then sat down. I was so happy!

I didn't punish him for screaming or force him to leave because he wanted to sit there and was trying to hit Child 2 to get the spot. He had just gotten hurt *and* really wanted to sit in that spot, so he just really needed help regulating his body. I heard his needs and helped him regulate his body enough to get what he needed in an appropriate way. We cooled down together and I helped him find his words. At first he wasn't ready to breathe with me, so I modeled for him to take deep breaths, to help him do it too when he could. Those first two breaths helped him start to calm down even though I was modeling it for him. The child was never shamed for being angry, only acknowledged and guided to express his needs appropriately.

#18
Strategy Used: Don't be rigid.
Situation: Mid-meeting, it was the child's turn to put her picture on the board (attendance routine for meeting). Child was having a really hard time choosing where to place her picture and said she didn't want to do it at all.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "You need to put your picture on the board. Choose a spot." Child: "I don't want toooo" in a whining tone. Me: This conversation went back and forth and finally I said, "Okay, you can go back to your spot and hold onto it."
Outcome/Notes: I wouldn't usually have let her do this. But I let her hold it; for some reason, she couldn't part with it. Later, when we were counting the number of children on the bus (part of meeting), she saw we needed her picture to know how many kids were there, but still didn't put it up. I counted it as part of the group total anyways. Maybe she felt tended to, listened to, by my letting her hold onto it, which is good.

#19
Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry.
Situation: Child didn't want to leave the playground. Children were lined up by the elevator ready to go. She was running away.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "It's time to leave the playground." Child tried running away. Me: I said, "Okay, I'll give you a hug and let's line up."
Outcome/Notes: I hugged her and she lined up no problem.

#20
Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry.
Situation: I gave the child extra time before the whole class cool down, to cool down on his own. I called in all of the children (from the hall to the classroom) for cool down and was going to call him too, but instead I just said "Okay, we'll stay out here and cool down before the cool down. The child was standing on a cubby and I told him to come down two or three times. He just wasn't ready to go into the classroom because he needed more time.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: “Okay you need more time to cool down.”

After some time, I said, “Are you ready?”

Child: “But you didn’t say willaby wallaby (child’s name)!”

He wanted me to properly call him in (I sang willaby wallaby for the other children).

I sang him wallaby wallaby into the classroom.

Outcome/Notes: He was aware of what we were doing and calmed himself down.

#21

Strategy Used: Problem solve/Invite the child to brainstorm with you

Situation: Child 1 was putting his toys in other kids’ faces (including Child 2, his friend).

Descriptive dialogue:

We were sitting on the rug in the block area.

Child 1 kept pushing his toys into kids’ faces and they didn’t like that.

Me: I kept telling him to stop but he wasn’t listening and couldn’t control himself. I tried discussing it with him and hearing his input. I asked him, “What are ways that we can play with friends?”

Child 1: “I can play with people; I can play with blocks.”

Me: “Oh, let’s call (Child 2’s name) over, (Child’s 2’s name) do you want to play with (Child

1's name) when he hits you like that?" Child 2: "Nooo." Me: to Child 1, "Oh so do you think you should hit him like that?" Child 1: "Nooo." Me: We discussed it a little more then I said, "Okay, you can go play, but we do not throw the toys in people's faces."
Outcome/Notes: This anecdote is an example of modifying the problem solving process to be age appropriate. I modified the conversation to be open-ended, yet concrete, and for him to be able to be part of the problem solving process without it taking too long causing him to lose interest. He understood the conversation. He was able to learn through partaking in the conversation with me that hitting others impacts him socially. But it seemed that he couldn't always control his impulses long-term; the learning didn't always stick for him. Nevertheless, this was a positive, constructive learning moment for him where he got to see, first hand, how his hitting made his own friend not want to play with him; thus helping him understand why he shouldn't hit with the toys.

#22
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale.
Situation: After coming down from the playground, Child needed a cool down before the whole class cool down. He wasn't being safe with other children. We walked up and down the

stairs and I explained why.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “We need to do this because your body is not cooled down yet and when your body is so wild, it’s not safe for the other children.” We walked up and down several stairs and he looked fatigued. “Are you ready now? Do you think you can go back in now?” He didn’t answer, I waited a moment and asked, “Do you understand my words?” Child: “Yes, I do.”
Outcome/Notes: He understood. This helped him be self-aware of his body’s needs and the impact his body can have on others.

#23
Strategy Used: Offer a choice.
Situation: Child was resisting going to the potty.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “It’s gonna be potty time, do you want to go 1st or 2nd or 3rd?”
Outcome/Notes: Child was excited about choosing a spot on the potty chart.

#24
Strategy Used: Offer a choice/ Choose relationship over control.
Situation: Potty time. The children showed lots of opposition for going to the potty. I worked on making this smoother and "choosing relationship over control" but still maintaining limits. I made a chart on the door of the bathroom with a picture of a toilet and Velcro spots below it so children could put up their pictures in the order of when they wanted to go. There were no numbers but they understand the concepts of going first, second, third and what it meant to go before or after other children. They were each handed their picture at snack, before potty time. They could "sign up" for their spot in line with their picture, giving them autonomy wherever possible within the potty process.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "Potty time is starting!" (using chart) "Do you want to go now or next? When do you want to go?" Me: "Potty time is something we do before we go the playground. We have to go potty before the playground, but we can choose when."
Outcome/Notes: The children showed less opposition. They were more enthusiastic actually, because they got to choose when. They were aware of going first or last and were excited to go.

#25
Strategy Used: Offer a choice/Say it with a word or a gesture.
Situation: Potty time.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I had been talking with the children, asking when everyone was going to go to the potty. One child in particular resisted a lot and even though the class was enthusiastic about the visual he still wasn't so interested. I looked at him and asked, "And you're gonna go?" in a friendly but firm tone. I said, "Now, it's potty time...okay when are you gonna go?" Child: he put his picture up last in line.
Outcome/Notes: This was good for him because he didn't like to go but really needed to before the playground because otherwise he would have accidents. With the potty initiative, he could actively choose to go last which he liked, but he knew that he was signing up to go. I used firm but kind tone. I tried using as few words as possible in moments like these so that it is kept as a toned-down matter. "Potty time!" pointing to the bathroom or the chart. Using few words and a gesture gave the children more autonomy, instead of me giving lengthy directions about what they needed to do. It was already something they weren't interested in, so when I gave a few words, that gave them more control over themselves; they heard me and knew what they needed to do.

#26
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale.
Situation: At meeting, a child while sitting in my lap, took her picture off of the attendance board and held it.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “You really want to hold it? You know something, we need to be able to know who’s in the class and if you’re holding your picture we’re not gonna know. So do you want to put your picture on the board now and I can go and get you your own picture with Velcro for later? Child: “Okay,” and she put her picture back up and with very little opposition.
Outcome/Notes: She felt heard and validated and my reasoning made sense to her. The tone of my voice was super empathetic and even slow-paced, making her feel heard. Then she felt less of a need to assert her control with her picture.

#27
Strategy Used: Don’t stick your no’s in unnecessarily.
Situation: Child wanted to bring her book to the drumming session but we don’t usually allow that.
Descriptive dialogue:

Child: she wanted to bring her book (from home) to drumming. Me: I told her "No" at first, but then I saw she really wanted to, I decided to be flexible. I informed her, "It might get ripped if you bring it to drumming. But if you want to bring it, it's your book." Child: she brought the book but then put it on the side.
Outcome/Notes: This moment was great because I was flexible. She often resisted with many rules in the classroom and this seemed to be important to her, so I let it go. But I informed her on why I thought it wasn't a good idea and she then had the knowledge to make her own choice. She brought the book but was responsible about how she handled it once she got to drumming. She put it on the side and didn't run around in drumming with it because she knew it might get ripped that way. She was able to make her own choice after being educated on the matter instead of simply being told "no."

The next two anecdotes, #28-a,b happened within a span of 10 minutes and involved the same child.

#28-a
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale.
Situation.: Child was throwing a shaker in the classroom.
Descriptive dialogue:

Me: “We can’t throw it, but you can shake it.” Child: “Okay.” He continued throwing it.
Outcome/Notes: He showed with his facial expression, that he understood my words. I reminded him how we use the shakers.

#28-b
Strategy Used: Use the least intrusive strategy/Be honest with them.
Situation b.: Child continued throwing the shaker unsafely.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I held the shaker and said, “I’m sorry but we can’t use it,” in an empathetic, kind tone. Child: he was very upset.
Outcome/Notes: He was very upset but I had to take it away. He wasn’t being safe with it and we don’t treat our shakers that way. I was as subtle as possible about taking it away and used an empathetic tone with him.

#29
Strategy Used: Use the least intrusive strategy/ Respect.
Situation: Child was about to hit another child. I intervened respectfully and explained that he needed to hold back from hitting and use his words instead.
Descriptive dialogue: Child 1 was about to hit Child 2. Me: I grabbed Child 1's hand and said with calm, emphasized expression, "Hold your body...hold your body," to match the emotion he was feeling since he wanted her to move. I said, "Use your words and say 'Excuse me, Please move.'" Child 1: "Excuse me, Please move."
Outcome/Notes: He didn't hit her and she moved. I was respectful and helped him regulate and use his words without making a bigger deal than it needed to be. I didn't yell or make a big scene. I calmly, quietly went over to the children and I held back Child 1's hand instead of taking him out of the rug area unnecessarily.

#30
Strategy Used: Attribute to children the best possible motive consistent with the facts.
Situation: Child looks like he might throw something at another child.
Descriptive dialogue: I waited to see what would happen. I tried not to let past experiences with him throwing things at children cloud my judgment. It wasn't a given that he'd throw something; therefore, I resisted running over and stopping him.
Outcome/Notes: He threw something at the child. This was a learning experience for me. Although I really didn't want to assume wrongly and risk making him feel bad about himself, I need to be realistic. This strategy doesn't mean "ignore the facts;" it means to be consistent with the facts. It's a difficult place to be in, because, I didn't want to run over and scare him by stopping him or holding him back when he's about to do something that may or may not be a danger for other children. Ultimately, it's educational for him, if I stop him; it's about *how* I do it that matters, because, considering the "facts" and past experiences with certain children, I have to be smart. Safety is important and hurting others is never okay.

#31
Strategy Used: Give them as much choice as possible.
Situation: Potty time.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: “This is the potty line (pointing to the visual); when do you want to go to the potty?”
Outcome/Notes: They were very excited. This potty initiative improved the class atmosphere during potty time. They used to resist much more; then they became much more excited about it because they had autonomy in the potty process.

#32
Strategy Used: Empathize/Accept the child’s feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior
Situation: Child was upset about his snack. I sat with him in the hall to help him calm down.
Descriptive dialogue: Child: at snack, was screaming and crying. He collapsed to his knees on the floor because he was so upset about his snack [it wasn’t entirely clear what bothered him—either having to wait for “seconds” on snack or the fact that his crackers were broken]. My co-teachers and I

encouraged him to wait and use his words but he was so angry, sad and frustrated. I brought him outside into the hall with his snack and held him on my lap while he cried. I held him tight, holding him in a big hug, and helped him to calm his body and be ready to eat his snack.
Outcome/Notes: He calmed down after a few minutes and was ready to go back in to the classroom to eat his snack. This moment was really all about being with him—where he was. He was extremely emotional and upset. He was so dis-regulated and needed someone to validate him and hear his needs to *feel* his emotions in that moment. So the two of us sat in the hall, where it was quiet, and I held him. We sat for a couple of minutes and I really felt his sadness for whatever was bothering him. He was ready to go back in after that.

#33
Strategy Used: Don't be rigid/Listen to the child's feelings and needs.
Situation: Child was dis-regulated during a transition; he was being destructive and unsafe, so I put tape on the floor for him to peel and feel organized.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I told him that I had something fun for him and put tape on the floor. He loved it and peeled it all off. I came back and told him I was going to make it harder so I made it in the shape of a zigzag which he loved.
Outcome/Notes: Even though I tried very hard to help this child adjust to challenging

situations—like transitions—with various strategies, at this moment, I needed to be even more flexible. He needed something different from the other strategies, like peeling tape from the floor, to focus him. Even though that was something I wasn't used to using as a strategy and my other strategies were so flexible—spending time focusing him, making a plan with him, sitting with him, making eye contact etc.—had I only stuck to those accommodations in this moment, then I would have exhibited rigidity. Even though those were inherently acts of flexibility on my part as a busy teacher, at that moment those strategies weren't working. The room was loud and there was too much commotion. Peeling tape was perfect for him and made him very happy.

#34
Strategy Used: Don't be rigid.
Situation: Child didn't want to wash her hands yet; she wanted to stay at the cool down activity for longer.
Descriptive dialogue: I was calling children from cool down to come wash their hands and she told me that she wanted stay with the teacher that was doing cool down. I was flexible and just said, "Okay," and called a different child.
Outcome/Notes: She washed her hands last with the other teacher. This child was usually

compliant with my requests and I saw this as one thing that she wanted, so why not give her more time in cool down when I can call someone else to wash their hands before her? That being said, there was little time for washing hands and I showed flexibility to switch to someone else, because if she said "no" then another child might have refused. I generally liked to keep the flow going.

#35
Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry.
Situation: Child wanted to continue washing her hands for a longer time than usual.
Descriptive dialogue: She said she wanted to keep washing her hands. Me: "Okay! You want one more minute? One, two, three…" I gave her more time and showed her by counting for her.
Outcome/Notes: She was happy with this. She complained and resisted a lot, so I decided this battle wasn't important, even though hand washing time was short and all the kids needed their hands washed (we only have one sink so time is everything).

#36
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale/ Describe the problem.
Situation: Child tried hitting another child's head with a hard plastic pipe structure, so I explained with words and showed with gestures why that wasn't safe.
Descriptive dialogue: I used phrases like "that hurts him" and modeled how hitting someone's head with the pipes could really hurt. I used strong facial expressions to convey with emotion as well as clear and short sentences. Then I showed how we can build on the floor with the pipes but not hit with them.
Outcome/Notes: The child was taught about the impact of his actions instead of being attacked for them. I explained and modeled the rationale, giving him the tools to understand why he shouldn't hit with the pipes, even if he wanted to. This gave him autonomy because I gave him tools to understand why he shouldn't hit instead of being yelled at and told to stop without an explanation.

#37
Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more
Situation: I was reading a book to the children on the rug and Child 1 couldn't see because Child 2 was blocking her.

Descriptive dialogue: Instead of telling Child 2 to move, I asked her, "Where do you think you need to go?" Child: "The orange spot?" Me: "Okay."
Outcome/Notes: She moved to the orange spot. There was no negative interaction where I would force her to move. I consulted with her and gave her autonomy in letting her solve the issue. This way, she was invested and interested in moving.

The following three anecdotes #38-a, b and c happened within a span of 5 minutes and involved the same child.

#38-a
Strategy Used: Offer a choice.
Situation: Child was asked to come to the elevator at the end of playground time. She resisted and started screaming.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: "(Child's name) you wanna scream? Okay you can scream for a little bit longer. Stay up here (at the playground with me)."
Outcome/Notes: She screamed for under a minute.

#38-b
Strategy Used: Don't be in a hurry.
Situation: After she screamed, I gave her more time to run around, even though the class had left. She seemed to need more time at the playground.
Descriptive dialogue: N/A
Outcome/Notes: N/A

#38-c
Strategy Used: Explain the rationale.
Situation: Once she got more time to run around, she noticed that everyone from our class left.
Descriptive dialogue: Child: "Where did everybody go?" Me: "Well we stayed up here. We were running around and everyone left. So it took a long time to for us to get downstairs."
Outcome/Notes: These strategies really worked out for her. I think it helped her because she understood that when she runs around when it's time to go, she ends up alone without the class. This helped her to see the cause and effect of her choices and to learn that, next time, it makes more sense to go with the class so she isn't alone.

#39

Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more.

Situation: We were having a group rug activity and the Child was sitting in the corner of the room when he wasn't supposed to be. I genuinely asked him why he was there and we had a conversation.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: I pulled up a chair to where he was and sat in front of him and asked, "Can I sit with you for a bit?"

Child: "Yeah"

Me: "I like sitting with you." I barely addressed the fact that he was supposed to be elsewhere. I talked with him a bit about other things and then I genuinely asked, "What are you doin' over here? I see you're sitting over here."

Child: "I just need to rest my body."

Then we were able to just talk a little bit with each other about how we were doing, joked around and then I said, "Okay, are you ready?"

Child: "Yea, I'm ready."

Me: "Okay great!" I called him with the willaby, wallaby song to the table.

Outcome/Notes: Then we went over to the table for lunch.

This wasn't easy for me to do. I wanted (very badly) to tell him immediately to go to the rug.

He knew the activity was happening and that he needed to be there. But I knew this child well. He often liked to leave the group activities to do what he wanted on his own. I took a patient, understanding route with him because I thought I might have more success that way. What's the point of forcing him to the rug? He would have just run away again and it would have been unproductive. This way, he saw that I trusted and cared about him and took his needs seriously because I let him stay for a minute while his body rested. Then I told him calmly that he needed to go to lunch. He was given time, patience and validation and he came around to getting up on his own without me forcing him to with bad feelings.

#40
Strategy Used: Be authentic.
Situation: Child didn't want to go to the potty.
Descriptive dialogue: I asked her to go to the potty and she resisted, saying that she went at home. I dropped the topic and had a genuine conversation with her about how we recently saw each other outside a supermarket. We talked about how fun that was and she got so excited. We both were so excited talking about it, authentically sharing a moment together. I picked her up and gave her a big hug. Then she went to the potty without a problem.
Outcome/Notes: She went to the potty. She felt the genuineness during the connection we

shared and didn't feel the need to resist anymore.

#41
Strategy Used: Talk less, ask more/Don't be rigid.
Situation: Child didn't want to go to the bathroom.
Descriptive dialogue: "Why not?" I asked in an empathetic tone. "Oh, I'll get you a book, do you want me to read you a book?" She agreed and I read to her while she went to the potty.
Outcome/Notes: When children resisted using the potty, those moments took up valuable time because the class needed to get to the playground in time, so that they could have adequate play time. Everyone needed to use the potty before we could go. This rush made it hard for me to give them extra time when they resisted using the potty. This anecdote showed that, despite the time crunch, I still chose to be flexible, to empathize and to read to her, even though it took a few extra minutes.

#42
Strategy Used: Accept emotions while stopping unacceptable behavior/Explain the rationale.
Situation: Child tried to move other children's pictures on the potty chart so that s/he could

move his or her picture to a different spot in the order. Our rule for the potty chart was that once a child chose a spot in line for the potty, we didn't move their picture.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: in an empathetic tone, "It's really hard not to move your picture around to different spots, but it's not something we do...it's not nice to move people's pictures and when someone's picture is in one spot, you have to put your picture in another spot, even though it's hard."
Outcome/Notes: Child listened. S/he felt validated and heard, making it easier to accept the rule I was enforcing.

#43
Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behaviors/Give descriptive praise.
Situation: Child struggled with doing something she had to do.
Descriptive dialogue: "Wow that was hard for you."
Outcome/Notes: I praised her for making a choice that was difficult for her. I used descriptive words about what she did, so that the focus of the praise was on what she did instead of my evaluation of it.

Small group setting: six and seven-year-olds. Anecdotes numbers: 44-54.

#44
Strategy Used: Describe what you feel/State expectations/Express your feelings and needs.
Situation: Two children were complaining about a project I set up for them to do.
Descriptive dialogue: Children: "This is a bad project." Me: "You know, those words hurt my feelings. I only want to do lessons that you guys like, but I put work into it and if you want to say something to make them better, you can share that, but please change how you say it."
Outcome/Notes: They stopped complaining after that. I felt hurt because I spent time coming up with the project idea. It was not only an emotional moment for me but also a teachable moment. It was important for me, as a person, to share my feelings, but the way I did it made it into a learning moment for them. I explained to them why I was upset and gave them tools to continue to speak their minds, but more appropriately and with care for my feelings in the process.

The next two anecdotes, #45-a and b involve the same child and happened consecutively in one conversation.

#45-a
Strategy Used: Invite the child to brainstorm with you.
Situation: After class, I asked Child how the class went for him that day.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I approached him and asked how class went, because I told him, "I know sometimes you don't like it." Child: He said it was good, really enthusiastically, "Because (child's brother's name) came and helped clean up and it was good because (child's brother's name) was here and he really helped clean."
Outcome/Notes: This child complained often that he didn't enjoy the sessions but other times he said he loved them. I asked for his input to give him space to share what he liked or didn't like about it. In doing this, I made him part of the "construction" of the class, providing him with ownership over his experience.

#45-b
Strategy Used: State expectations.
Situation: I continued the conversation after class and gave him a preview of next week's class schedule.
Descriptive dialogue: Me: I said, "We're gonna look at these maps (showed him maps) and color them in... here's where (another teacher he knows) lives" (I pointed to a city on the map). Child: He got so excited about it.
Outcome/Notes: He was given preparation for the next class to make him feel involved and ready for it. He was excited by it and loved the information I told him. I told him something that I genuinely thought he'd find interesting. This gave him a positive connection to the class which was tremendously important for him because sometimes he really disliked it.

#46
Strategy Used: Reconsider your requests/ Don't stick your no's in unnecessarily.
Situation: Child refused to partake in the map project, even though he was excited about it when I told him about it after class the week before.
Descriptive dialogue:

Me: I was explaining the project to the class. Child: interrupted me and said, “I’m not doing it.” three separate times during my instructions for the class. Me: I responded a few times, “Okay, one moment.” Then I spoke with him privately and whispered, “What do you want to do instead?” Child: he said he wanted to free draw. Me: I asked him, “What can you do that still has (the map) in it? You need to know the four cities.” Child: he said he’d do (city name) in Minecraft (as a drawing). Me: “How about (city name) *and* (another city name)?” Child: he became happy and enthusiastic and started working on his drawing.
Outcome/Notes: He enjoyed it and even wanted to bring it home! I was very flexible with him and this allowed him to still learn about the topic, just a little differently. I had wanted him to learn four cities and he only did two, but I thought it was worth it for him to learn more happily. He was so excited and connected to the work that he did. It gave him a positive association with the learning experience, more than forcing him to do it how it was originally planned.

#47

Strategy Used: Don't stick your no's in unnecessarily.

Situation: Child asked to bring his brother into the class while he colored. At first I said, "Okay," but then "no," because he needed to color, It often took him a long time to do his work and then he would get upset when he didn't finish on time. He wanted this, though, and asked sincerely.

Descriptive dialogue:

Child: "Can I bring in (child's brother's name)?"

Me: "Okay. Actually, no, you need to finish."

Child: "Please, he can color…"

Me: I thought for a moment and then said, "Okay fine. Sure. If you want."

Outcome/Notes: In this moment, I let go of some control and basically said, "Okay, why not?" showing an element of trust. I realized that it seemed like this would make him happy and it was his choice if he cut down coloring time for himself.

He brought his brother in and completely took on the roll of caretaker. He told his brother to color about a certain topic, which was the lesson I had just taught! He explained the lesson to him and gave instructions for what kind of scene he should draw. He colored his own project and his brother did his. He said to his brother, "Wow great job, nice coloring (brother's name)!"

Ultimately, it helped him so much to have his brother there. He became a leader and grew. He

was so calm. It made the time exponentially better for him because he retaught the lesson and really internalized it!

#48

Strategy Used: Be honest with them.

Situation: The children said they didn't like today's project.

Descriptive dialogue:

Children: told me that they didn't like today's project.

Me: "How do you think that makes me feel when I work hard to make you lessons and you say that they're bad and you don't like them?"

Children: "We don't mean it when we say that. We're kids; you have to realize what kids do...yes means no, no means yes."

Me: "I said just now that we'd do research books—which *you* suggested!"

Children: "We don't want to do anything!"

We opened up a conversation and addressed matters genuinely. They ultimately said they <u>did</u> like it but in their yes=no, no=yes code.

Outcome/Notes: My honesty moved them to be honest with me too. It was good to have genuine communication between us. After all, I had planned an activity that *they* had requested but were now not interested in.

It was also a good moment for me as a teacher, because the children showed me that they were being silly and didn't always mean every word they said. It's not easy to continue with a project when children say they hate it, but sometimes they are just being silly or immature and the project should continue or a genuine conversation should ensue.

#49

Strategy Used: Listen to the child's feelings and needs, Accept feelings.

Situation: The kids said they wanted to make books about the various topics in our class. I didn't enforce any specific project but gave them choices and took their ideas.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: "For (holiday) we're going to do your idea to make books." To one child in particular I said, "That was your idea. What would you like your book to be about?"

Child: "I don't know!"

Me: "Let's look at what (holiday) is about and you can think about that."

Outcome/Notes: The kids took ownership of their work and complained less. I aided one particularly emotional child by accepting his emotions. Making books was his idea, but he exclaimed that he didn't know what to make his book about. I helped him figure it out on his own.

#50

Strategy Used: Be honest with them.

Situation: The children were interrupting a lot while I was reading them a story. I admitted honestly to them that it was just too hard to read when they interrupted so much.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: After they've interrupted my reading several times I said, "I can't." firmly, with frustration. Children: "Can't what?"

Me: "I'm only up to here (I pointed to the beginning of the story on the page)."

Children: "But I have things to say."

Me: "Okay, but sometimes you have to hold it in or raise a quiet hand."

Outcome/Notes:

The next child that wanted to speak raised his hand and I answered his question.

It was challenging because I tried to be extremely flexible and was very patient with the children, but sometimes, as I wrote here, "I can't." Sometimes, it took honesty and communication to work something out. Of course I wanted them to feel comfortable to speak up, but I wanted them to do so in a way that was conducive for what we were trying to do. *That* was what I was trying to communicate and what I believe they understood.

#51
Strategy Used: Listen to the child's feelings and needs.
Situation: I brought special cookies to class.
Descriptive dialogue: I tried to buy the ones that I thought each of the kids would like, even though I was tempted to buy new flavors that they could try. I presented the cookies in class.
Outcome/Notes: One or two of the children were upset about some of the flavors that they didn't like so much. However, they appreciated that I tried to get ones that they liked. I told them that they had a few options: if they didn't like one, there were others to eat. It was good experience for me, to see that I couldn't always win and that even if I tried to do the best thing for them, it didn't always work out. They weren't easy to please and although I tried hard, I saw that sometimes children weren't going to be happy.

#52
Strategy Used: Problem solve/Listen to the child's feelings and needs.
Situation: We did an open-ended project about a holiday. I set this up as part of a problem solving process. The children didn't like other projects, so this was an act of trying to help them construct their own experiences and enjoy the projects more.

Descriptive dialogue:

I set out the resources (information/facts about the holiday, art supplies) for the kids to make any project that they wanted, representing the information in some way. This was a way for them to create their own learning experience. One child took the resources and made a book about the topic.

Outcome/Notes: I was so surprised! I did not expect this. I noticed from the past unit that the children were creative and seemed to not always enjoy the projects I planned for them. So I put aside my ego and didn't plan the projects for this unit and instead set out the resources for them to create their own projects. This showed respect for their unique learning styles and preferences, as well as their thirst for learning. My respect for their needs ended up bringing about even more enriching projects than I would have planned for, had I delivered the lesson without being open to their needs.

#53

Strategy Used: Accept the child's feelings even as you stop unacceptable behavior.

Situation: Child refused to partake in a project.

Descriptive dialogue:

Child: "Nononono! I don't want to do that!!!" I won't do that!"

Me: Very calmly I responded, "(Child's name) you're really not interested in that. I can talk to you about that in a minute and we can work something out for you."

Outcome/Notes: This reaction validated him and helped him cool down from being tense. Since we didn't speak about it for a few minutes while I worked with other children, he had more time to transition from being tense to calm.

#54

Strategy Used: Don't be rigid.

Situation: Child 1 said he didn't want to do a project.

Descriptive dialogue:

Me: I went over how to do the project with the other children and answered their many questions.

Child 1 said he wasn't interested in the project we were doing.

Me: I told the other children that they had my permission to try things themselves and to ask each other for help on the remainder of the work. Now it was this child's turn to just have one-on-one attention. I didn't let him leave and I pushed him to continue. I stood over his shoulder and devoted three full minutes to give him attention and help him.

Child: He did well when I was with him. Then he said that he wanted to leave (it was early).

Me: I said, "You know what, you did great today, so you can go."

Outcome/Notes: This was a major success for him!! It was so important to be flexible and let him leave early. Especially since it was a breakthrough for him to endure something he didn't like and to work at it. I decided that he was allowed to get some slack after that and leave

early. An important lesson for me as a teacher is that I can only push a child to do so much at one time.

Permission Letter

Email from Rena Rice to Julie Wasserman on July, 15th, 2016.

Julie,

I've checked with my co-chair of the IMP committee, and we agree that you may proceed with your study, under the conditions noted in previous emails, i.e., that names and identifying information will be disguised. This message will serve as the "letter of consent" from the committee.

Best wishes for a successful completion,
Rena